

BUILDERS OF HISTORY



CANADIAN EDITION

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO.



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BUILDERS OF HISTORY

CANADIAN EDITION

"History is the essence of innumerable biographies"

Carlyle

"The heroes' deeds and hard-won fame shall live"

TORONTO
LONGMANS, GREEN & CO.
210 VICTORIA STREET

New Impression
1928.

PRINTED IN CANADA

H. BEST PRINTING CO., LIMITED
TORONTO, ONT.

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CONTENTS

	PAGE
ALFRED THE GREAT - - - -	5
CANUTE, THE DANE - - - -	23
HAROLD, THE LAST OF THE SAXON KINGS -	32
HEREWARD THE WAKE - - - -	53
STEPHEN LANGTON - - - -	81
SIMON DE MONTFORT - - - -	87
SIR WILLIAM WALLACE - - - -	101
ROBERT BRUCE - - - -	114
GEOFFREY CHAUCER - - - -	134
WAT TYLER - - - -	154
SIR RICHARD WHITTINGTON - - -	167
JOAN OF ARC - - - -	184
WILLIAM CAXTON - - - -	203
SIR FRANCIS DRAKE - - -	218
WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE - - -	238
SIR PHILIP SIDNEY - - -	255
SIR WALTER RALEIGH - - -	269

ALFRED THE GREAT.

I.—THE YOUNG PRINCE.

MORE than a thousand years ago there lived in England a King named Ethelwulf. He was not King of all England, but only of a part of it. He ruled over the kingdom of Wessex—the land of the West Saxons.

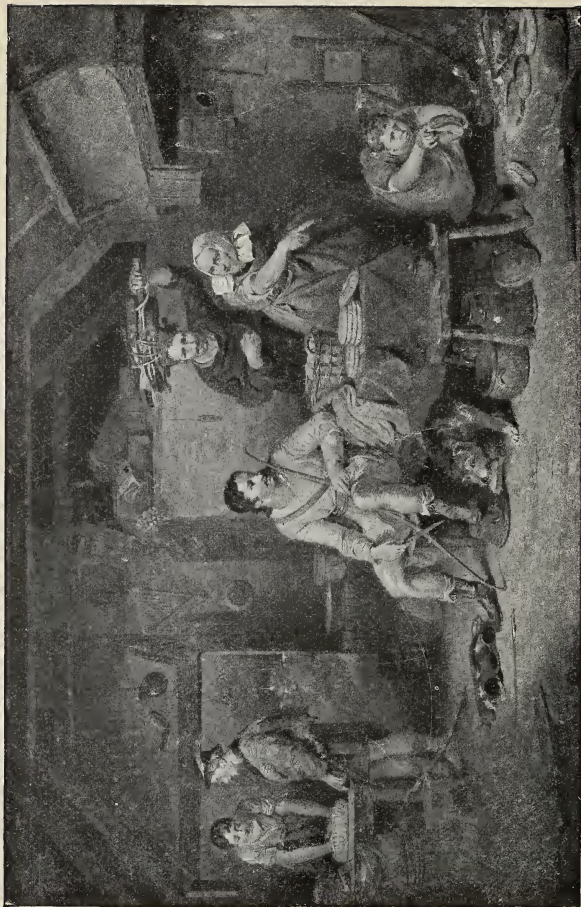
Ethelwulf had five sons, each of whom became King in his turn; but the youngest of them all, Prince Alfred, became one of the greatest Kings that ever ruled over the English people.

He was born at Wantage in the year 849. He was a very beautiful child, and even at an early age showed signs of great cleverness of mind and sweetness of character. His father loved him dearly, and made up his mind that the boy was going to grow up to be a great man.

When Alfred was five years old, his father sent him across the sea to visit the Pope. The Pope was the head of the Christian Church, and he lived in Rome.

The Pope became very fond of the handsome, clever lad. He foretold that Alfred would be King some day, and kept him by his side, teaching him, and telling him tales of the great men of bygone days.

Alfred was always a very thoughtful child. He was not so strong as his companions, and cared more for



ALFRED IN THE HERDMAN'S HUT.

learning than for outdoor sports. But there were few teachers to be obtained in those troublous times. Many of the wise monks had been killed by the Danes, and others had left the country. As for the nobles, their time was too much taken up in fighting for the safety of their homes for them to bother about learning from books.

So it came about that almost all the education which the young Prince obtained was hunting the deer and the boar, shooting with bow and arrow, casting the lance, and learning how to sit a horse well and ride long distances without becoming tired.

Yet, in spite of all the difficulties which were set against him, Alfred did manage to learn to read. And this is the story of how he came to do so.

His stepmother, Judith, was one day reading to her children from a book of poems. This book was beautifully made. It was, of course, written, and not printed as books are to-day. All the capital letters were painted in gold and many colours. There were marvellous pictures, fairly drawn, on every page, and the reading and the pictures told of the gallant deeds of long-dead heroes.

As Alfred listened to the stirring poems, he thought how much he would like to have that book for his very own. And when at last his stepmother looked up from the pages, she saw the eager interest of the young Princes.

"I will give this book to him who first learns how to read it," she said.

Then the other young Princes were very sad, because they knew how hard it was to learn to read.

But Alfred made up his mind that he would earn the reward. He took the book from his mother's hand, sought for a master who would teach him how to read it, and after a short time was able to go to his mother and recite the poems.

So, in hunting and other manly exercises, in the reading of books and the learning of prayers, Alfred's early life was spent. As he grew from a boy to a young man he surprised everybody by his wisdom and goodness of heart. His face was handsome and noble to look upon. His speech was frank and free. The people loved him better than any of his brothers.

II.—THE YOUTHFUL WARRIOR.

Years passed by, and Alfred grew up from a boy into a handsome and clever young man. His father Ethelwulf was dead, and now Ethelred, his brother, was King of Wessex.

Soon after Ethelred came to the throne a large army of Danes landed in the north of England. This army was led by two chiefs named Hingwar and Hubba, savage men, whose deeds were so dreadful that their names were feared all over England.

After conquering nearly all the North Country, Hingwar took a part of the army and invaded the lands of the East Angles. The King of that country, a brave and good man named Edmund, was taken prisoner by the Danes.

They asked him to give up Christianity and to worship their own heathen gods. But he steadfastly refused, so they tied him to a tree and shot his body full of arrows.

Now came the turn of Wessex, for another Danish chief, named Guthrum, sailed with a large fleet up the River Thames.

Quickly King Ethelred called his army together, and for a year the war raged. Alfred, a boy of eighteen, was his brother's chief general, and fought in no less than six battles in one year.

At last, one day in the year 870, the two armies met at a place called Ashdown, or the Hill of the Ash, in Berkshire. The Danes occupied the higher part of a sloping plain, in the centre of which one solitary ash-tree grew. Their army was divided into two parts, under the command of two chiefs.

Ethelred remained in his tent for a long time before the battle, praying to God that he might receive help in the coming struggle. But Alfred, eager to come to grips with the foe, marched hotly against them.

For many hours the battle raged, and when at last the Danes broke into flight, the field was covered with the bodies of the gallant dead.

The rest of the Danish army fled to Reading, where they took refuge in some marshy ground near the river. There Alfred and his brother, the King, pursued them. Another battle was fought, in which King Ethelred received his death-wound.

Sadly the Saxon thanes bore the body of their King to Wimborne for burial. Their hearts were heavy. Six battles had they fought in one year, and now they were weary of fighting, for there seemed no hope that the Danish invader would ever be driven from England.

III.—ALFRED BECOMES KING.

Alfred was now King of Wessex and overlord of all the English. Yet he was a King only in name. Before he could begin to rule in his own country he had a hard task before him. From end to end of England there was war. No sooner were the Danes defeated in one place than they sprang up in another.

No time was given Alfred to mourn his brother. Less than a month after his crowning he was forced, much against his will, to lead his weary men against the Danes once more. The two armies met at Wilton. The English force was very small, and was defeated with heavy loss.

Alfred now tried to persuade the Danes to leave his country in peace. He offered them rich treasures, great stores of gold and silver, if they would only leave Wessex. They took his money, and made solemn promises that they would do as he wished.

For a short time they kept their promises, and marched their armies into other parts of the country. Now that he was left in peace, Alfred tried to think of a plan by which he could save the kingdom. Every day other Danish ships with their crews of fierce sea-rovers were sailing into England. Alfred saw that if he could make it impossible for these men to land, he would have a greater chance of winning the victory.

So he ordered ships to be built—long, low ships, something like the Danish galleys, but with many improvements of his own. His ships were to be larger than those of the enemy. They were to carry more

men. They were to be twice as long and twice as high, and they were to be swifter and steadier.

These ships were built, and thus Alfred was the first King to form a fleet for the purpose of guarding our shores. He was the founder of the British Navy.

The ships, manned with brave Saxons, sailed the English seas. The men were ordered to prevent any of the Danes from landing, and also, if possible, to cut off their supplies of food.

One day Alfred's "guardships" sighted a great fleet of Danish vessels. There were one hundred and twenty galleys filled with heathen soldiers. The Saxon fleet gave battle; and so well did the sailors fight, and so well were their good ships built, that they gained a glorious victory. Hardly one of the enemy's vessels was left afloat.

The first six years of Alfred's reign were spent in continual fighting. The Danes had soon forgotten their promises. They returned to Wessex, and captured the cities of London and Winchester. Alfred's army was beaten again and again.

At last, in despair, he drew together all that remained of his army, and fled to a place called Athelney, or "The Isle of Nobles." This was an island formed by the joining of the two rivers Tone and Parrett. Round this island were deep swamps, and beyond them dense forest land. Few people knew the paths that led to the fortress Alfred built there.

For some time Alfred and his men lived at Athelney in great misery. They had a very great difficulty in obtaining food. The reeds at the edge of the lakes and streams were full of water-fowl, but after a time

these were frightened away. Several times Alfred led bands of his men against the Danes, giving them battle, and taking from them supplies of meat and corn.

A very pretty story is told of Alfred's life in Athelney. It is said that one day, when all his men were away hunting, and Alfred was alone in the house with one servant, a poor beggar came to the door.

He was tired and hungry. His clothes were travel-stained and torn by the bushes through which he had forced his way. He begged the King to give him a morsel of bread, "for," said he, "no bite of food has passed my lips this day."

Alfred called a servant, and asked him what food there was in the house.

"Alas! master," said the man, "there is naught but one loaf of bread and one cup of wine."

Alfred commanded the servant to give the poor beggar half the bread and wine. "No man has so little," he thought, "but what he has enough to share with a needy fellow-creature."

That night, so the story goes, when Alfred had retired to bed, he dreamed a dream. He thought that the beggar-man whom he had helped appeared before him in all his dirt and rags.

And lo! as Alfred looked, the filthy rags dropped away, and there stepped from them the form of Saint Cuthbert. He smiled upon the King.

"When you helped the beggar in his need," said he, "you helped the saints of God Himself. And for a sign that this is more than a dream, when you awake, your servants will bring you news of a wonderful catch of fish." And the beggar smiled again and vanished.

Alfred awoke, wondering. Soon afterwards his men returned from fishing the meres and streams.

"Master, master!" they called as they saw him, "to-day we have caught such a great number of fish that our nets could hardly contain them all. We were sore afraid lest they should break the meshes and escape. We have brought home enough food to last us many days."

Then, says the old story, Alfred knew that it was no mere dream he had dreamt, and that God still watched over him.

IV.—AT ATHELNEY.

One day, while still in exile at the Isle of Athelney, Alfred set out with a few companions to hunt.

Towards the middle of the day he became separated from his friends, and wandered here and there, trying to find them. Blast after blast he blew upon his hunting-horn, but the thicket was so dense and his men so far away that they did not hear him.

As Alfred walked on and on, he began to see that he had lost his way. He was tired, and very hungry and thirsty.

At last he came to a rough cabin built in some open ground, and, knocking at the door, he begged for shelter from the heat of the sun, for a crust of bread and a drink of water.

The housewife made him welcome. "See," she said, "I am just about to bake some cakes for dinner. I have put them on the hearth to cook. Do you watch them for me while I go to get a bundle of sticks for the fire. Do not let the cakes burn."

Alfred promised to do as he was asked, and sat down before the hearth. In his hands he held his bow, and while he sat there he began to mend the cord and to trim the feathers of his arrows.

His mind was full of the miseries which his countrymen had suffered at the hands of the Danes, and he sat for quite a long while brooding. So deep were his thoughts that he did not notice the smell of the burning cakes. When the housewife returned she found them burned to a cinder upon the hearth.

She was a good woman, but hasty-tempered.

“You lazy loon!” she cried, dealing the King a box on the ear which almost stunned him. “Can you not do such a simple thing as turn a few cakes? I’ll be bound you will eat them fast enough when the time comes!”

Alfred meekly accepted the rebuke because he felt that he deserved it. After refreshing himself with food and a rest, he passed on his way, and soon came upon his companions, who were eagerly seeking him.

While Alfred remained in Athelney the Danes still kept up the war in other parts of England. Hubba, their fierce chief, took a fleet of vessels and sailed down to the coast of Devon. There he landed and attacked a strong castle. The Danes encamped round about it, cutting off all supplies of food and water, thinking that by this means they would starve the Saxons out.

Over the Danish camp floated their flag—the Standard of the Raven. This was a banner of silk embroidered with the figure of a raven, which had been made in one day by the sisters of Hubba.

The Raven Flag had floated over many a field of death. Behind it, as it was carried across the country,

the smoke of burning towns had trailed and the cries of the wounded and dying been heard. It was said that whenever the Danes fought under it, if they were to gain the victory, the raven came to life and flapped its wings. But if they were to be defeated, the flag hung motionless like a dead thing.

The people in the castle did not mean to remain there to be starved into giving up their arms. Early one morning they rushed out suddenly upon the Danes, taking them by surprise.

The knowledge that they were fighting for liberty made their arms strong. They fought so fiercely that they won the battle. King Hubba was left dead on the field, and the famous Raven Standard was captured.

When news of this great success was brought to Alfred at Athelney, he determined to act at once, and so follow up the advantage that had been gained.

V.—ALFRED'S PLAN AND ITS SUCCESS.

Now Alfred was a very skilful player upon the harp. Remembering this, he dressed himself in the clothes of a wandering minstrel, and, leaving Athelney, took his way to the camp of Guthrum, the Danish King.

In those days musicians often wandered from place to place singing their songs. Wherever they went they were made welcome. They entered the hall where warriors were feasting, and were given a seat at the table. Then, after the meal was done, the harper took his instrument and sang songs of the great deeds of brave men, often making up the verses as he went along, and setting them to a tune of his own.

Dressed as a harper, Alfred made his way to Guthrum's camp. He found the army just returned after a victory. In the King's tent the warriors were feasting and drinking. Fearlessly Alfred approached and touched the strings of his harp. So sweet was his voice and so wonderful his song that all listened eagerly.

When the song was finished Guthrum called Alfred to his side. "Who art thou," he asked, "harper whose voice is sweet and whose songs are brave?"

"A poor singer," answered Alfred, "who is content if he may please his lord."

Guthrum kept Alfred by his side, making him sing again and again. When the feast was over, the captains met together to talk over their plans for the next battle.

Alfred was forgotten. He crept to a quiet corner, and lay there listening. He knew that if the Danes discovered who he really was, his life would not be worth a minute's purchase. So he pretended to be asleep, closing his eyes and snoring loudly. Nevertheless, he was very far from being asleep. His ears were open, and he heard every word that was uttered.

Presently, when the captains were gone, and the camp was quiet, and Guthrum fast asleep, Alfred stepped quietly from the tent.

He had to pick his way over the bodies of sleeping men. With great care he chose every footstep. Now and again a sleeper turned, to throw a great arm across his brow and murmur in a deep voice. Now and again a dog, alarmed by his stealthy passage, barked a warning, and then Alfred, his heart beating in his ears, stopped quiet in the shadow.

At last he succeeded in getting safely away, and returned in triumph to his own camp. He now knew all the plans of the Danes, and meant to waste no time. Quickly he called his men together. He sent messengers in different directions to bring other soldiers to fight for him.

When all was ready he marched forth. News of his coming had spread throughout the country. He was met by many of the men of Somersetshire, Wiltshire, and Hampshire. When he encamped that same night he was in command of a large army.

The next morning he was up early, and marched to a place called Ethandune, where he met the army of the Danes.

A terrible battle took place, in which Alfred was victorious. Most of the Danes were left dead upon the field, their King Guthrum was taken prisoner, and much rich treasure was captured.

This one battle, coming as it did after the defeat and death of Hubba, served to turn the tide in favour of the English. One of their Kings was dead and the other captured. It was now the turn of the Danes to ask for peace.

Alfred was a merciful victor. He was only too willing to free the country from war. He and his chiefs met together with Guthrum and made a treaty of peace. By this treaty the Danes were given a part of England in which they might live.

This land was called the Danelagh. It consisted of all the country to the east of the great Roman road called Watling Street. If you draw a line on the map from London to Chester, and another from Middles-

brough to Lancaster, you have roughly marked out the northern and southern borders of the Danelagh.

Guthrum became a Christian, and was baptized under the new name of Athelstan. He became a great friend to the King, and never afterwards made war against him. As for the Danes who were in the country, they settled down upon the land which Alfred had given them. There they lived side by side with the Saxons.

As years passed by they became loyal Englishmen, owning this country as their home.

To keep the great victory of Ethandune fresh in men's minds, Alfred caused the figure of a white horse to be cut in the chalk hills near the battle-field. That horse may be seen to this day, for the people who live near keep it fresh and free from grass.

VI.—ALFRED "THE GREAT."

Now that the Danes were defeated and the kingdom was his own again, Alfred found that his task as King had only begun.

At last there was peace in the land. But the people had suffered much from the constant fighting of the last twenty years. There was hardly a large town in England that, at some time or other, had not been burned to the ground. The learned priests had fled the country, and their monasteries had been plundered and burnt.

The common people, too, were living in great misery. During the time of war there had been no chance for the making of just laws, or even for causing those that were already made to be kept.

Alfred now proved himself as wise as he was brave. He caused all the great lords to become his followers, and with their men they formed an army to defend the country in time of need. The fighting men of the villages were divided into two bodies. While one half was fighting the other remained at home to till the soil.

Alfred paid great attention to the laws of the land. He caused them all to be written down in a book, and added others of his own. More than that, he saw that they were obeyed. So wise were his laws, and so well were they kept, that it was said, after he had been King a few years, that money or jewels might be left upon the public roads without fear of thieves.

The navy which Alfred had begun to build in the time of his trouble was now strengthened and made larger. There was still fear of invasion from the Danes, for fleets of sea-pirates from time to time sailed over to England in search of plunder. It was the work of the navy, as it still is, to guard the shores.

The towns which had been burned and pulled down were rebuilt. Castles were erected near the coasts to help in the work which was being done by the navy. Schools, colleges, and monasteries sprang up again.

Alfred sent all over Europe for the best teachers he could find. He knew that the power of a people depends upon its education. Often he grieved because, in his own early days, his time had been so much taken up by fighting that he had had little to spare for learning. Now, however, he wished to make up for the lost time.

There were in those days no clocks. Alfred wished

to measure time so as to make quite sure that none of it was wasted, and sought about for a means to enable him to do so.

At last he hit upon a plan. He caused six large candles, each of the same weight and of the same length, to be made. These candles were of such a size that the six took twenty-four hours to burn. He then divided each candle into twelve equal divisions by marking rings upon it. Thus he could measure time by the burning of a candle.

But he found that when the candles were placed in a draught they burned quicker at one time than at another. To remedy this he made four-sided shields of thin horn, which were placed round the candle to protect the flame from the winds.

Having now made rough clocks by which he could judge how the time went, he divided his day into three parts.

For eight hours he studied, reading books with scholars and priests, or listening to the teachings of wise men who came to his Court from beyond the seas.

Another eight hours he gave to public business, the making of laws, and hearing those who came to ask for justice. The last eight hours of the day he spent partly in prayer and partly in taking his rest.

Often when all his courtiers were asleep, and the palace was very still in the silence of midnight, Alfred would steal to the church, and there spend hours upon his knees, praying to God to bless his work and make it good.

It was always King Alfred's aim to know all that

was going on in his kingdom. When he was forced to be absent from home, his judges and nobles took his place, and gave justice to all who asked. When the King returned, he made it his business to find out all that had been done while he was away. If he found that any person had been unfairly treated, he set the matter right.

So it came about that his people loved him, and his power grew greater and greater. He was known as Alfred the Truth-teller, because he scorned all forms of lies. Another name by which the people knew him was "England's Darling."

You have perhaps read, in a fine poem of Longfellow's, how

" Othere, the old sea-captain
Who sailed from Helgoland,
To King Alfred, the lover of truth,
Brought a snow-white walrus tooth,
Which he held in his brown right hand,"

and how he told the King of a wonderful voyage he had made far into the northern seas.

You may be sure that Alfred listened eagerly, for he always encouraged sailors to make voyages of discovery. Any trader who fared three voyages overseas in his own vessel was given the rank of "thane" or noble; and in many other ways Alfred encouraged exploration.

It is in his reign that we notice the very first evidence of that daring spirit which has sent English people all over the world, so that now it is said that an English flag flies in every harbour. For Alfred sent messengers to the Christian Churches in far-away Jerusalem and India.

Alfred was never a very strong man. All his life he suffered from a painful disease which no doctor could cure. But he bravely bore his trouble, and in spite of it managed to do more work in the twenty-four hours of the day than perhaps any other man in his kingdom.

When we think about the life of Alfred, and wonder why he is called "The Great," let us remember that it was not only because he was a brave fighter. It was not only because he saved his country from the Danes that people loved him and revered his memory.

It was because he ruled his people wisely and well ; because he saw that peace was better than war ; because he protected the poor and watched over their rights ; because he laboured always for the good of his people.

As a poet who wrote in his lifetime said :

" Alfred, England's head-man, England's darling,
He was King of England. He taught them
That would hear him how they should lead their lives.
He was both a King and a Scholar. He loved well God's
work ;
He was the wisest man that was in all England "

CANUTE, THE DANE.

IN the year 1013 Sweyn, King of the Danes, sailed with a powerful fleet to conquer England. Many times before had the dark sails of his galleys appeared at the river-mouths. His men had marched through England with fire and sword, burning churches and villages, slaying men, women, and children. For Sweyn's sister, Gunhilda, had been killed with hundreds of other Danes on St. Brice's Day, and he had sworn to be revenged on Ethelred, the weak and unwise King who had ordered that cruel deed.

When Sweyn landed, so terrible were his name and fame that the Englishmen "trembled before him like the rustling of a bed of reeds shaken by the west wind." And he drove the Saxons before him like a flock of sheep, and beat them in many pitched battles. At last he was made King, but he was never crowned, for soon afterwards he died.

Then his son Canute sailed to England to claim the country his father had conquered. Poor, foolish, frightened King Ethelred had fled away to Normandy. When he heard that Sweyn, his enemy, was dead, he returned to his own country. But the people would no longer have him for their King.

When Ethelred died, not long afterwards, his son

Edmund made up his mind to try to drive the Danes out of the country. This Prince was a manly fellow, tall and strong, and he was called "Ironsides," because of his strength and skill as a fighter.

Edmund Ironsides was crowned in London, and Canute was crowned at Southampton. So that now there were two Kings in England.

Of course, each was determined to drive the other out if he could possibly do so. The men of London fought for Edmund Ironsides, and enabled him to make a good fight.

And what kind of man was this Canute, the terrible Dane? Well, to begin with, he was not tall and strong and handsome like Edmund—in fact, he was quite a little man. But he had by no means a little heart or a little brain. He was grave and wise and practised in fight—a mighty leader who became a great King.

The armies of the two chiefs fought many battles. Sometimes Edmund Ironsides won, and sometimes Canute, and it seemed as though the struggle would last for a long time.

One day the two armies came together at Gloucester, and it was easy to see that a very terrible battle was to be expected. Then the wise men on both sides put their heads together and thought matters over. "Why are we such fools as to put our lives in peril?" they said to each other. "Let the two men who wish to reign settle their quarrel between themselves. Let them fight together, and let him who wins the fight reign over us."

The idea was told to the two Kings. Edmund

Ironside agreed at once ; he was only too pleased to have the chance of winning a kingdom by the power of his sword. Canute did not agree at first. He was not a bit afraid, but he knew that Edmund was a much taller and a much stronger man than he himself was, and he thought that the combat would be unfair.

However, at last he agreed. Lists were set up near the camp. The two champions put on their coats of mail and shining helmets, and, as the trumpets sounded the signal, mounted their swift war-horses and rode to give battle.

“Canute was as fierce as a dragon,” says the old monk who wrote an account of this fight, “Edmund as bold as a lion. No one could find in the whole world an equal to Canute or Edmund.”

And now the two Kings spur their horses and dash together. Each strikes the other full upon the breast-plate with his lance. The horses rear before the force of those blows, and the splinters of the breaking lances fly into the air.

Then each draws his shining sword, and once again the combat begins. Canute, small though he is, has more skill than Edmund. Edmund's blows are harder than those of Canute. For a time the advantage sways from one to the other.

But now Canute is becoming tired. His blows fail of their mark, and are easily parried by his foe. On the other hand, the longer the fight lasts the fresher Edmund seems to become. He leaps upon Canute, striking at him with his heavy sword, and Canute fears that his last day has come.

He will not let Edmund see his fear, but pretends

that he is as strong and fresh as ever. Mustering up all his strength, he strikes a terrible blow. Down swings the blade. Edmund's shield is forced aside, and the keen edge of the sword shears through his armour, cutting off a link of the mail. Edmund gives back, and then Canute, putting up his sword, says :

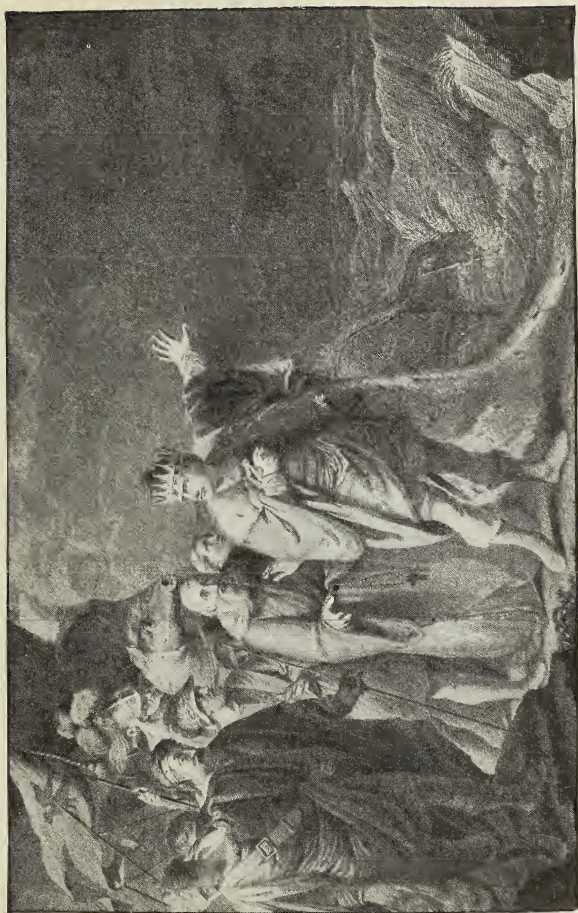
“Edmund, friend, now listen to what I am going to say. It would be a sad thing for a young man like you to perish in this fight. I am lord and King of the Danes, and you are King of the English. Your father is dead, your brothers are in Normandy ; you are all alone and without aid. It is true that you have been elected King ; but then, on the other hand, so have I. And you cannot drive me out, or make me give up the crown, for you are not strong enough.

“Now, I am sorry for you, Edmund. Your beauty, your boldness, your gentleness, and your youth, fill my heart with pity. I do not wish to oppose you any longer, for I would rather have your friendship than kingdom, county, or city.

“I propose to you that we should both be Kings over the same people. Let us fight no more, but divide the kingdom between us. As we were before enemies, let us in future be steadfast friends. And neither of us, in peace or war, will fail the other in this life.”

When Edmund heard these words he was glad. He threw away his sword and unlaced his shining helm. Then the two Kings embraced and became friends.

It was decided that Edmund was to reign over Wessex, East Anglia, Essex, and London, while Canute retained Mercia and the North Country.



KING CANUTE ON THE SEASHORE.

Edmund did not live very long to reign as King. About seven months after his battle with Canute, Edric, one of his father's nobles, caused him to be murdered. After the dreadful deed was done, this traitor came to tell Canute. He expected that he would be rewarded, and so he was.

"I will set your head higher than that of any other man in my kingdom," said the King. And he kept his word, for he commanded that Edric should be beheaded, and his head placed upon a high pole upon London Bridge.

Canute was now King of all England and of Norway and Denmark beside. He had set his heart on forming a great northern empire over which he might rule. Before he could do this it was necessary that he should have peace at home.

He made up his mind to win the love and goodwill of the English people. He did not wish them to think of him as a foreigner, but as an Englishman. In order to carry out his plan, he dismissed his Danish soldiers, and showed the people that he meant to rule them justly and wisely.

His reign had not begun in a very fortunate way. There had been much bloodshed and cruelty before he was made King. He now wished, by kindness, justice, and wisdom, to make the people forget the horror of the days during which he had fought against them. His father, Sweyn, had burnt down many churches. Canute paid large sums of money to the monks so that they might build them again. He took a great interest in all the work the monks did, and showed them many favours.

Some interesting stories are told to prove how wise and good Canute was. In one of them we are told that he went to visit the monks at the Abbey of Ely. This abbey was built upon an island in the Fen Country.

As the King's servants rowed him over the quiet waters, faintly to their ears came the sweet sound of singing. It was the evening hymn which the monks were chanting in the chapel.

Canute sat in the boat and listened attentively. Afterwards he composed a poem about the song of the monks. Only the first verse of this poem now remains to us :

“Sweetly sang the monks of Ely
As King Canute rowed thereby.
Row, boatmen, near the land,
And let us hear these monks sing.”

It is also said that one day, while in his palace at Southampton, his courtiers were flattering him. One noble told him that he was so great a King that he was lord even of the sea and sky.

Canute rose to his feet. “Take my chair,” he commanded, “and set it on the seashore.” Then, bidding his courtiers follow, he made his way to the beach. There, a few feet away from the edge of the water, the throne was placed, and Canute sat himself therein. The tide was coming in fast, and as the King watched the breaking waves he addressed them proudly.

“Come no farther,” he shouted to the flowing sea ; “I am your master ! Do not dare to flow over the land that is mine, or to wet the feet of your lord !”

But the tide rolled in, taking no heed of the King's

words. The astonished courtiers stood round the throne, huddled together and a little afraid. Still the waves came on, until at last one broke at the feet of the King, drenching him with spray.

Then Canute turned sternly to his men. "Let all men see," he said, "how worthless is the power of earthly Kings. For there is only One King who can say to the sea, 'Thus far shalt thou come, and no farther.'" The nobles slunk away ashamed. And Canute, taking the royal crown from his head, sent it to the cathedral at Winchester, and never wore it again.

For eighteen years Canute ruled the country wisely and well. He did not make any attempt to force Englishmen to submit to Danish laws. Instead of that, he ruled them by the laws which Alfred the Great had made. When, in the early part of his reign, he went to Rome, he sent a letter to the English people.

"I have vowed to God," he said in that letter, "to govern my kingdom justly and to act rightly in all things."

He also advised all his officers not to treat the rich better than the poor, and not to take money from the people by force. "For," he said, "I have no need of money gathered by unjust means."

Under his rule the prosperity of the country increased. Not having to fight one with the other, men found more time to do their work. Forest land was cleared, marsh land drained, and waste land cultivated. Trade with other countries improved, and ships from far-off lands brought cargoes of rich goods to the ports. For two

hundred years after Canute's death in 1035 there was peace in the land, except for the fighting at the time of the Norman Conquest and the Civil war in the reign of Stephen.

That was Canute's greatest gift to the English people—the gift of peace.

HAROLD.

I.—THE HERD-BOY WHO BECAME AN EARL.

It is said that, after one of Canute's battles with Edmund Ironside, a number of the Saxons fled to the woods. A Danish captain, whose name was Ulf, took a small body of men and pursued them. He rode fast and far, yet could find no trace of those he sought, and, after many hours, came to a halt in the depths of a thick, dark forest.

There he rested for a time in order to give food to his men and horses. But, when he would have returned, he found that he had lost his way. Every yard ridden by his little band seemed to take them deeper into the wood. The tall trees grew more closely together; the dense brushwood grew thicker still.

Ulf began to think that he would never get back to camp; and he was much afraid lest any of the Saxons should come upon him, and kill his men or take them prisoner. Evening began to close in, the shadowed wood grew darker, and still there was no trace of a path.

Just when the Danes had almost given up hope a boy was seen coming towards them. He was dressed very simply in the rough garb of a Saxon peasant. He appeared to be about sixteen years of age. His face, browned by exposure to the sun, showed no trace of

fear as he gazed at the armed men. His blue eye was clear and frank, and he waited in silence as Ulf reined his horse before him.

"Boy," said Ulf, "we are Danes who have lost our way in your dark English woods. We belong to the army of the great King Canute. Lead us out of this forest to the camp of our master, and a rich reward shall be given you."

The boy looked again at the armed men. "I will do as you ask," he replied simply; "follow me."

But Ulf was a little afraid lest this Saxon youth should lead his men to where the Saxon soldiers were.

"Hark ye, boy!" he shouted: "if you are unfaithful to us, terrible shall be your punishment."

The youth turned with a smile on his lip and in his eye. "Fear ye not," he answered; "I will well and truly deal with ye. But haste, for the night comes on quickly, and the woods are dark, and the way is hard to find."

The Danes followed the dimly-seen figure of the boy. Each man clutched at the hilt of his sword and loosened the blade in its sheath. Ulf, their leader, riding before, peered with anxious eyes into the shadows on either side of the way, fearing each moment to hear the shouts of the enemy, or to feel his horse's feet sink in the mud of a hidden marsh.

But all was well, and soon the Danes were out of the wood and on an open road, and all their fears passed away.

"Yonder lies Canute's camp," said the boy, pointing up the white road. "Follow it straightly, and ye will be there before the dawn."

Then Ulf took from his right wrist a massive bracelet of gold, and held it out to the young guide.

“Take this ring,” he said; “it is of red gold and of great value. It will buy you many a pretty thing. Take it as a reward for your faithfulness and truth.”

The youth looked proudly at the Dane. “I do not want your gold,” he said, and stood there waiting.

Ulf looked at him with surprise. “What, then?” he asked. “Is it not enough? What would you have?”

The boy’s reply was uttered in a clear and ringing voice. “Take me with you,” he answered, “to the camp of the great Canute. Let me be a soldier in your tents. Let me bear arms for your King, for I am tired of keeping swine and tending cows, and I would live the life of a warrior.”

Ulf listened and wondered. He liked the look of the stalwart Saxon. He liked the frankness of his bold blue eye, the upright way in which he carried himself.

“So be it,” he made answer. “You shall come with me to the camp. I myself will watch your fortunes, and if you are brave and true as you have been to-day, a great future lies before you.”

So the boy went with Ulf to the camp of Canute. And he became a soldier. He fought well and bravely for the King, and showed as well that he was cleverer than common men. And Canute trusted him, and made him knight, and afterwards an Earl, and gave him riches and broad lands.

The name of that boy was Godwin, and he was the father of Harold, the last of the Saxon Kings.

II.—HAROLD COMES TO GREAT POWER.

Earl Godwin was the father of six tall sons and one fair daughter. As their father grew in power and might, his children shared his honours. His daughter, the beautiful and saintly Edith, was given in marriage to King Edward the Confessor. His sons were lords of land that stretched from the Humber to the Thames, and Godwin himself was Earl of Wessex, so that almost all England was ruled, under the King, by the Godwin family.

Harold was the fourth son of this powerful Earl. He was good to look upon, for he was tall and straight, deep-chested and strong-armed. His frank and honest face was framed in curling yellow hair, which fell to his shoulders. His white neck, tattooed in blue, as was the Saxon custom, sloped to a pair of mighty shoulders, well fitted to swing that heavy battle-axe which few but he could wield.

Harold was beloved by all who knew him, because of the honesty of his character. Two other of Godwin's sons—Sweyn and Tosti—brought dishonour to their father's name, but Harold was in everything a dutiful son, and his father's right hand.

Before following the fortunes of Harold, we must go back a little and see what happened after Canute died.

Two of the sons of the Danish King reigned in turn. They were neither of them wise and good like their father. During the reign of both of these men Godwin's power gradually grew, and he became rich. When Hardicanute, the last of the Danish Kings, died,

Godwin was the most powerful man in England. It was he who sent to Edward, son of Ethelred, and invited him to become King. It was his power that made the King's throne safe.

Edward came to England from Normandy. As soon as he became King, he sent for many of his Norman friends, and kept them by his side. The English people did not like this. They were not pleased that foreigners should surround the King, and advise him, and be rewarded with presents of English land and English money.

Godwin grumbled more than any other noble. Time after time he advised the King to send the Normans away ; but the King would not, and the former friendship between the two gradually changed into enmity. The King became jealous of the great power that Godwin and his sons possessed. He thought that the man who had given him his throne might be able, if need arose, to tear him from it.

At last an event happened which brought Edward and Godwin to an open quarrel.

One of the King's Norman friends, Count Eustace, came to Dover, and tried to force a citizen to give free board and lodging to his men. The Saxon refused, and one of the Frenchmen, in sudden anger, struck him, so that he fell, dying, to the ground.

Then strife broke out. The citizens of Dover fought with the Normans, and killed more than twenty of them. Eustace hurried away to the King to tell his tale. Edward commanded Godwin to go and punish the men of Dover, for the town formed a part of his earldom.

Godwin, quite rightly, refused. He said that he was

willing to give the men a fair trial, and to listen to any complaints, but that he would not punish them without hearing what they had to say.

Then the King grew very angry. He banished Godwin, with all his sons, from the realm. Godwin fled to Flanders. Harold, whom the King loved, was allowed to go to Ireland and remain there.

But Godwin was not the man to stay long in banishment. Collecting a large fleet, he sent word to his son Harold to join him, and sailed to the Isle of Wight. There Harold came, bringing more ships and a large army of men. In a little time the fleet set sail for London.

As the vessels sailed up the Thames, the Saxons who lived on either bank flocked to Godwin's banner. They loved the great Earl, and they loved his son Harold. Besides, they were very angry because of the favour which the King showed to foreigners.

The King drew together his Wise Men, who advised him to allow Godwin and his sons to come back to England, and to take possession of their own lands. The King knew that the people were on the side of Godwin, and, to avoid war, he agreed. So the Normans were sent oversea to their own country, and Godwin returned.

A few months afterwards the great Earl suddenly died, and in his place Harold became the most powerful man in England.

III.—HAROLD'S OATH.

For twelve years Harold held almost kingly power.

The poor old King, Edward, during this time was daily becoming weaker and weaker. He thought more of the world to come than the world in which he lived. He spent most of his time in praying and fasting, and was quite content to leave the government of the country to Harold, for he loved and trusted him.

Across the English Channel, in the land of Normandy, lived Duke William, Count of the Normans, one of the greatest soldiers and one of the wisest rulers of his day.

Duke William was a distant relation of Edward the Confessor, and was very friendly with that King. Before Godwin had caused all Normans to be driven from the country he had paid a visit to England.

Edward, who had spent the greater part of his youth at the Norman Court, was very friendly with William. He lodged the Duke in his royal palace at Westminster, next the stately church that he was building there ; and when the Norman returned to his own country, Edward loaded him with rare and costly presents.

Many times did Duke William think upon the fair realm of England. The old King Edward had no children to reign after he was dead. William himself was cousin to the King. Why should not he be elected King by the English when Edward was gone ?

It was said that Edward had promised that William

should be his successor. Edward, however, had no right to make such a promise, for the crown was not his to give. Meanwhile William watched, and waited, and planned.

Now it happened one day that Harold, with a few men, put out to sea in a small fishing-boat ; for Harold was fond of sailing, and would often go out fishing with his men.

When the vessel was some distance from land a great storm arose. The waves rose high and dashed upon the ship. The winds blew so strongly that the sails were carried away. The rudder was broken. The vessel became unmanageable, and drifted whither the wind blew her.

In the morning Harold's men saw that they were close to land. Soon the vessel struck, and they were able to swim to shore, cold, hungry, and miserable, but otherwise unhurt.

But their adventures were not finished yet. It was a rule in those fierce old days that shipwrecked men could be taken prisoners, and held to ransom. Hardly had Harold and his men made an end of telling each other how glad they were that they had escaped with their lives, than a company of armed soldiers sprang at them, bound them fast, and carried them away.

Harold now found himself in a dark dungeon. He had been captured by soldiers in the pay of Guy, Count of Ponthieu. As soon as Guy discovered who his prisoner was, he determined not to let him go until a large sum of money had been paid as ransom.

The country upon the shores of which Harold had been wrecked was not very far from Normandy. In fact, the Count of Ponthieu was one of Duke William's vassals—that is to say, he owed Duke William obedience.

By some means or other Harold succeeded in sending a messenger to the Duke, begging him to command Guy to set him free. When William heard that the great Harold Godwin, the foremost man in all England, was in trouble, he gladly came to his aid. He commanded the Count of Ponthieu to deliver up his prisoner, promising in return a rich gift. As he made it quite clear that, unless Guy did as he was asked, he would be compelled to do so, Harold was sent to the Court of the Norman Duke.

William rode out with all his nobles to meet the returned prisoner. He had made a brave array. Round him in coats of shining mail rode the great Norman nobles. Silken banners waved in the air, and as Harold approached, the trumpeters sounded a salute.

Let us take a glance at these two men as they sit, each on horseback, facing the other.

Harold's usually open brow is a little clouded now, for he is angered at the way he has been treated. His clear, blue eye is sullen. Nevertheless, he is a brave figure. Tall and comely he is, like a King of men. He sits his horse proudly. The long curls of his yellow hair shine in the sun. His head, which has never been bowed before a foe, is thrown a little back, the strong shoulders squared under the flowing cloak. As William looks upon the noble form of this English

Earl, he thinks that he can well understand why men are ready to follow him to the death.

William himself forms a striking contrast to Harold. He is broad, thick-set, and a little inclined to be stout. His closely-cropped black hair grows back from the forehead as though he were beginning to grow bald.

But that forehead is broad and high. From under the black brows shine a pair of piercing eyes. The thin lips of the mouth are pressed together ; the chin is firm and square.

Who shall say what thoughts were in Harold's mind as William advanced, smiling, to meet him ? He was, perhaps, a little suspicious of William, as all true Saxons were of men of the Norman race. But he did not show his distrust, and answered William's courteous greeting with gentle words.

Harold remained with Duke William for some weeks, and then asked for leave to return home to his own country. William, however, put him off. He did not wish, he said, to let him go so soon. He asked him to give him aid in a war which he was carrying on in Flanders. Harold agreed, and fought bravely by Duke William's side.

When the soldiers returned from the war, Harold once more asked that he might be allowed to go back to England.

Then William showed why he had been so ready to rescue Harold from captivity. He wished to become King of England when Edward the Confessor died. He knew that without Harold's aid he would have no hope of peacefully obtaining the crown, for Harold was the strongest noble in England.

He now wished to gain the Saxon to his side. He explained his hopes, and asked Harold to help him to become King. If Harold would only do this, he said, he would make him the first of his nobles, and give him his daughter, the beautiful Adela, to wife.

Harold did not know what to do. He was entirely in the Norman's power. He knew that if he refused to give his word to help William he would be thrown into a prison, from which he might never escape alive. He was alone in a foreign land. In the end, he gave his word.

But the wily William was not satisfied yet. Harold's promise had been given when no one was by to hear it. William desired all men to know that Harold had promised to be his man.

Accordingly, when all was ready for the Englishman to return home, he called him into the great hall of his castle to bid him farewell. The Duke, clad in his robes of state, sat in the throne at the end of the hall. Round him stood knights in shining armour, and priests in flowing robes.

As Harold knelt to kiss William's hand, the Duke raised him with a smile. He told the Earl that he wished once again to hear him promise to help him to the crown of England. A large box was brought in, covered with a pall of cloth of gold.

Bishop Odo, brother of the Duke, placed the box before Harold, and told him to lay his hand upon it. Seeing that he had no choice, Harold obeyed.

"Swear," said the Duke, "that thou wilt help

me to the throne of England, even as thou hast promised."

Harold repeated the oath; then the pall of cloth of gold was removed, and he was bidden to look inside the box.

It was full of holy relics—the bones of the saints.

Harold's face grew white as he looked. Dreadful indeed would be his sin if he dared to break such an oath. It was with a heavy heart that he made his last farewells, and stepped on board the ship that was to carry him to England.

IV.—HAROLD BECOMES KING.

After Harold returned to England he became even more powerful than before. Edward the Confessor was growing very old and feeble. He did not wish to be troubled with affairs of State, so that the government of the country was practically in the hands of the great son of Godwin.

In the January of 1066 the King lay dying in a room of his palace at Westminster. It is said that on his deathbed he named Harold as King after him.

However that may be, soon after Edward was buried, the priests and nobles of England, gathered together at Westminster, offered Harold the crown. By birth he had no right to it. But he was the ablest man in England, the King had left no children, and he was elected by the council of the Wise Men.

We may be sure that Harold thought of his oath to Duke William as he made up his mind to accept

the crown. He told himself that the promise had been forced from him, and that he was not compelled to respect it.

Meanwhile a messenger flew to carry the news across the sea to William. He found the Duke hunting in one of his parks, surrounded by many noble knights and fair ladies. When William heard that Harold had become King, his bow dropped from his hand, he clutched at the hem of his robe, and his face grew dark and cruel. Without a word he turned from the brilliant crowd of courtiers, threw himself into a boat, and was rowed across the Seine to his castle.

Once there, he sat in his chair with his head resting on his hand, brooding. None dare speak to him, for they knew how terrible was his temper when he was aroused. The Court was silent.

At last William gave orders that a messenger should be sent to Harold, bidding him give up the kingdom to William, and reminding him of his oath.

Harold answered that the kingdom was not his to give, and that the people had elected him as King. As for his oath, he told William that it had been forced from him, and that he refused to keep his word.

As soon as he received this reply William made up his mind to invade England, and to wrest the crown from Harold by force.

Meanwhile in England Harold was finding his way very difficult. Many of the nobles refused to obey him as King. His own brother, Tosti, was filled with jealousy, and wished to tear him from the throne.

For about nine months Harold reigned without

trouble. But at the end of that time his brother Tosti landed in Northumbria with a large army.

With Tosti was a fierce Norwegian King named Hardrada. He was seven feet in height, and very strong and brave.

As soon as Harold knew that this great army had come against him, he marched to meet them.

The two armies met at Stamford Bridge in Yorkshire. Before the battle began Harold made one attempt to keep peace, for his heart was heavy within him because he had to fight his own brother.

He put down the face-guard of his helmet so that his features could not be seen. Then he rode to the front rank of the enemy.

"Is Earl Tosti there?" he asked.

The Earl himself made answer: "He is here."

Then said Harold: "Your brother sends you a message of peace. If you will submit to him, he will give you a third part of his kingdom."

"And if I accept this offer," replied Tosti, "what will he give my friend the King of Norway for his trouble?"

Harold made answer: "Seven feet of English ground for a grave, or as much more as his height is greater than that of common men."

"Go back to your King," said Tosti, "and tell him to make ready for battle; for never shall it be said with truth that Earl Tosti deserted his friend who had come to give him aid. We will die with honour or win England by a victory."

Harold turned and rode sorrowfully back to his own lines. Hardrada, who had been standing near

Tosti, asked the Earl if he knew who the messenger was.

The Earl replied : " That was King Harold."

" Why did you not tell me before ?" asked Hardrada. " Had I known that the man was Harold, he would never have gone back in safety to his own camp."

" He is my brother," coldly replied Tosti. " I should have been a murderer had I betrayed him."

Soon the battle began, and waged for many hours. Wherever the fight was fiercest Hardrada was to be seen, swinging his terrible sword and shouting out aloud the songs of battle.

At last he fell with an arrow in his throat. Tosti continued fighting bravely until he too was killed ; and when the fight was done hardly one of Tosti's men was left alive upon the field.

Hardrada's son was taken prisoner, and Harold sent him home in safety to Norway.

Harold's army retired to York, and no sooner were they there than news was brought that Duke William of Normandy had landed at Pevensey.

V.—THE BATTLE OF HASTINGS.

Duke William set sail from Normandy with the largest fleet that had ever been seen. There were more than six hundred large vessels, and many other smaller craft of all kinds.

Duke William's vessel was the gift of his wife Matilda, to whose patient fingers we owe so much of our knowledge of the history of the time.* It was the

* She made the Bayeux tapestry.

largest of them all. At night a bright light flared from its mast-head ; during the day it could be distinguished by its brilliant red sails and by the figure of a boy at the prow in the act of bending a bow.

For some time rough winds had kept this great fleet in harbour. Harold had well known that it was being formed, and had taken steps to guard the shores. But the best fleet he could get together was only an army of fishing-boats, and all the fighting-men had travelled to the north with him to fight the King of Norway.

At last the wind blew towards England, and the fleet set sail. In a few hours it had crossed the Channel, and was off the coast of Sussex.

One of Harold's fighting-men, who had been left behind, saw the landing of Duke William's mighty army. From a high hill he watched the small boats ply between the ships and the shore.

First came the archers, in their leathern coats, their bows slung behind them, their quivers, full of long arrows, hung on their shoulders. Then came the war-horses, neighing and stamping with fear. Last of all, the knights with their broad-bladed battle-axes, their heavy steel maces, and their long pointed shields, got into the boats and were put ashore.

In hot haste the man who had seen all this mounted his horse, and rode to carry the news to the English King. Almost without rest he rode north to York, and, as he went, the news of William's landing spread through England.

Flushed with his recent victory at Stamford Bridge,

Harold was feasting with his men at York when the messenger strode into the chamber. He was covered with dust and sweat. He brushed his matted hair from his eyes as he halted before the King.

“To arms!” he cried. “The Norman is here! I have seen his ships at anchor at Pevensey. I have watched his men, a mighty host, tread the shores of England!”

Instantly all was confusion. The feast was given up. Collecting his men, Harold immediately marched south to give the invader battle.

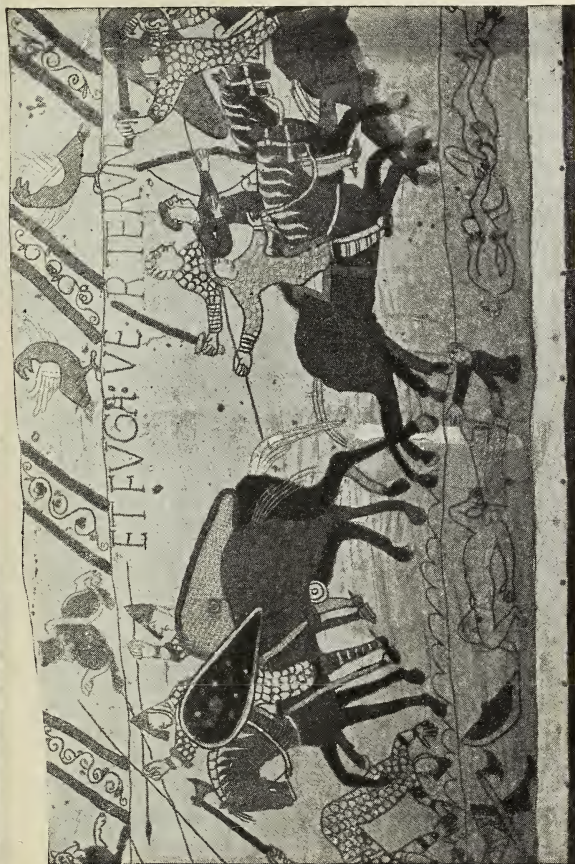
There was no time to seek to raise a larger army. There was no time to wait for the wounded to become strong. Only the horsemen could go with their King, for he was in great haste.

On the way men flocked to his banner from the farms and the fields. When, fifteen days later, he drew up his men before William’s army, his host consisted of a great number of poorly-armed peasants and a few hundred armed knights.

Harold took up his position on a piece of high ground near Hastings. On his right there was a marsh. He dug trenches in front of his lines, and set down sharply-pointed stakes to meet the charges of the Norman horse.

In the midst of the field were set the two banners of England, the Dragon Standard of Wessex, and Harold’s own flag, which was of silk, richly jewelled, and showed the figure of a fighting-man. Round these banners Harold placed the flower of his army, his armoured knights and nobles.

The eve of the battle was spent by the Normans in



THE NORMANS FIGHTING AT THE BATTLE OF HASTINGS.

This picture was worked with the needle by the wife of William the Norman. It shows very well the armour worn by the Norman horsemen in the great battle.

prayer and fasting. The Saxons made merry, drinking, singing, and shouting far into the night.

In the morning William sent a messenger to bid Harold give up the kingdom. Harold scornfully refused, and the battle began.

The first blow was struck by a Norman minstrel named Taillefer. This man, a giant in size, rode before the troops, chanting songs of heroes, throwing his heavy sword into the air, and catching it again by the hilt.

An English horseman spurred to meet him. Almost without a pause the minstrel clove him to the brain. Another came forth, and met the same fate.

But now another comes, lance in rest, charging down on the Norman. His sharp spear-point pierces the minstrel's breast, and Taillefer goes down with the last word of his song on his lips, to be trampled to death beneath the hoofs of his heavy steed.

A long cry of sorrow rises from the Norman host, and with terrible fury they throw themselves upon the English.

Their heavily-armoured steeds bearing the mail-clad knights thunder across the plain, only to break like waves before the shield-wall of the English. Harold has told his men to stand fast behind their protecting stakes. In front the shield-bearers kneel, behind them stand men with battle-axes and swords, and from the centre the archers shoot deadly volleys of arrows.

Time after time the Normans charge in vain. Mad with rage, Duke William spurs his horse toward the standard. His heavy steel club clears a way before him. His horse is struck down, and he hardly escapes with his life.

Then a cry arises through the Norman ranks : " The Duke is dead ! The Duke is dead ! "

William strikes a knight from his horse and mounts again. He lifts the vizor of his helmet. " I am not dead," he cries, " and, by God's help, will yet win the day ! "

Hopeless of ever being able to carry the strong position of the Saxons, William bids his men pretend to flee. They do so, and, flushed with victory, the Saxons pour from their stronghold to pursue. When they have left the hill, the Normans turn suddenly and cut them to pieces.

Now the tide of battle has turned, yet still the fighting goes on round the standards of England. William bids his archers shoot into the air, so that death may come, unseen, like rain from the sky.

At the end of the day there still remain a handful of English warriors fighting round their King. Harold himself, bleeding from a score of wounds, wields his terrible axe. His brothers, Gurth and Leofwin, fight by his side.

Suddenly an arrow strikes the English King in the eye, and he falls to the ground, with his dying breath imploring his men to fight on. One after another the handful of Englishmen fall until only brave Gurth is left.

Terrible are his blows, and none dare approach him. At last William himself strides up, and with a blow of his sword kills the last of the Saxon nobles.

Night has fallen. The moon is shining coldly upon the battlefield, heaped high with the bodies of the slain.

On the very spot where the last fight had taken place William erected his tent, and he and his men sat down to eat and drink among the dead. As the night grew on and the Norman camp grew silent, pale lights were seen flitting over the field. They were lanterns carried by the friends of Harold searching for the body of their King.

They buried him at Waltham, and upon his tomb the monks wrote these words in Latin :

“HERE LIES HAROLD THE UNHAPPY.”

HEREWARD THE WAKE.

I.—HEREWARD IS OUTLAWED, AND SLAYS A BEAR.

HEREWARD, sometimes called the "Wake," or the "Watchful," was the second son of Earl Leofric of Mercia.

How Hereward spent his early days we do not know. We are told that he was not a very good boy. He was fond of mischief and rough play, as most boys are. But instead of growing better as he grew older, his conduct became worse. He put himself at the head of a band of wild companions, who did all sorts of foolish things. They worried the farmers by driving off their cattle, and often stopped honest men in the roads.

Hereward's father and mother reasoned with him to try and make him a better boy, but it was all in vain. He grew from bad to worse.

One day he stopped a priest against whom he had a grudge. The priest was riding home from church. Hereward knocked him from his horse into the mud, took his purse from him, and left him.

Now, in those days, to rob a priest was considered a greater sin than to rob an ordinary man. Perhaps

Hereward had not meant to become a thief. He was the son of a rich man, and had plenty of money of his own. Anyhow, a thief he was. He had robbed a priest, and, to punish him, King Edward the Confessor said he must be outlawed.

This was a very terrible punishment. It meant that he could get no protection from the law. If he had any enemies, they could kill him without fear of being punished. It meant that he must leave his own country, and wander as an exile in foreign lands.

When he was outlawed, Hereward was about eighteen years of age. He was not very tall, but was broad, and strongly built. Like most Saxons, he was fair-skinned and yellow-haired. His face was very handsome, save that his eyes were of different colours. One was grey and the other blue.

As soon as he heard the sentence that had been passed upon him, Hereward made up his mind to travel to foreign parts. Perhaps he felt sorry for what he had done. If he did, he did not show it. He pretended that he was glad to be compelled to leave his own home.

He told his friends about the wonderful adventures he would have, fighting against sea-pirates and taking part in foreign wars. Some of them wished to go with him, but he would take no one except an old servant of his father's—a man named Martin Lightfoot.

Hereward travelled away to the north, accompanied by his faithful servant. Beyond Northumbria he journeyed, even into Scotland—a wild land where

there were wolves and savage men. He went to the house of one of his father's friends—a man whose name was Gilbert.

There he lived happily for some months, spending his time in fighting against the northern tribes and in hunting the deer.

In the courtyard of Gilbert's castle there were cages in which wild animals were kept. How they roared when their feeding-time was nigh! Often Hereward stood before their dens and watched them. He knew that they were kept in order that young men who wished to be knights might prove their bravery by fighting them, and he longed to have the chance of fighting one of them himself.

The fiercest animal of all was a great white bear, who lived in a large den in the corner of the courtyard. What a monster he was! His great paws were armed with long curved claws. With one blow he could strike down a strong man.

Hereward went to Gilbert, and asked for leave to fight this fierce white bear. Gilbert only laughed at him. He told Hereward that he did not wish to lose him, and that it was foolish of a boy to think of fighting such a terrible animal.

So Hereward was forced to be content. But he thought that some day he would have the chance he wanted.

This came sooner than he expected. One day, when Hereward was returning from the chase, he heard a great cry of fear. He ran to the courtyard and looked in. There stood the white bear, who had broken his

chain and got free. All the men had run into the castle and shut the door.

But beside this, Hereward saw something else more awful still. A little girl of about fourteen years of age had been left outside when the door was closed. She was now weeping bitterly, knocking at the door, and begging the men to let her in. The cowards were too much afraid of the bear to do so. It seemed as if the little girl would surely be devoured.

As soon as he saw what had happened, Hereward drew his sword and rushed forward with a shout. The bear turned at the noise, stopped, waited a moment, and then, growling fiercely, made for Hereward.

Sword in hand, Hereward waited. The monster was within a few paces of him, erect upon his hind-legs. Hereward could see the sharp teeth in the open jaws, could feel the breath of the animal upon his cheek. Nearer the bear came, and nearer still; but before the blow from those terrible paws could reach him Hereward struck with all his force, clean upon the monster's head.

The bear fell. Hereward's sword, firmly jammed in the animal's skull, was torn from his hand by the weight of the falling body. For a moment he stood looking down at the beast he had slain; then, remembering the little girl, he went to her, and comforted her as best he could.

After this brave act everybody was talking about Hereward. Most people were pleased that a boy should have been able to slay such a fierce animal. There were one or two persons, however, who were



HEREWARD KILLS THE BEAR.

not at all pleased. They were the cowards who had fled from the bear, leaving the little girl outside in the courtyard.

These men became jealous of Hereward, and the fame his deed had brought him. They made a plot to kill him; but his faithful servant, Martin Lightfoot, heard what they thought of doing, and told his master.

The cowards had planned to kill him as he rode down a narrow path in the forest. They shot an arrow at him from behind. Hereward had put on his coat of mail, so that the arrow did him no harm. Then he charged the traitors, and killed them with his sword.

Ever after that he was called the "Wake," because no man could take him unawares.

II.—HEREWARD AND THE CORNISH GIANT.

For some months Hereward remained with Gilbert. Nobody was sorry that the traitors who had tried to kill him were dead. Hereward became more and more popular because of his beauty and courage.

At last he made up his mind that he would once again fare forth in search of adventures. The ladies and knights of Gilbert's company tried to persuade him to remain with them a little longer, but Hereward was determined to try his fortune in another place.

So he set sail with his faithful serving-man in a merchant-ship, and after many days came to the rocky coast of Cornwall.

At that time Cornwall was not a part of England, but, like Wales, was inhabited by people of the old British race. The Saxons thought that giants lived in Cornwall, and Hereward was very anxious to meet one of them.

The ship sailed into a quiet harbour closed in by big black rocks. Taking a small boat, Hereward and Martin sailed up the river until they came to a small town standing on one of its banks ; then they landed, and went to visit the King of that part of the country.

When they entered the King's house all the company were at dinner. Hereward and Martin took their seats at the table, and began to eat as if they had known the King all his life. No one paid any attention to them, or asked them questions, for in those days it was the rule to allow any strangers to enter and partake of food.

As he ate and drank, Hereward looked around him. He saw the tall, dark-haired Cornishmen seated on either side of the table. At the other end of the board sat Aleff, the King, and next to him a beautiful maiden, who was his daughter.

But the man on whom Hereward's gaze rested longest was a great fellow sitting next to the Princess. Hereward had never seen such a tall man. He had an ugly face, and his hair and whiskers were of a bright red. Every now and again he would cut off a piece of the meat in front of him and hand it to the Princess.

Hereward thought that the beautiful lady looked very sad. And no wonder ! For it was not pleasant

to have to sit next to a great clumsy, ugly fellow like the giant, and to be fed with meat by his greasy fingers.

As soon as the meal was ended, the King asked Hereward who he was and what he wanted. Hereward told him that he was an Earl's son, and an outlaw, and that he was travelling in search of adventures. He told the King that he was willing to help him to fight against any of his enemies.

Then the giant, whose name was Ironhook, looked up and made a sneering remark. Hereward would very likely have made a hasty answer, and have been killed for his pains, but, just in time, he looked towards the Princess. She put her finger to her lips, and shook her head, as if imploring him to be silent.

When the meat and bread had been taken away, everybody in the room except Hereward and Martin began to drink mead. The giant drank more than anybody else, and before the night was done he had fallen into a drunken sleep.

The next day Hereward discovered that this Ironhook was a man whom the King employed to fight his enemies for him. He was a very terrible fighter, and all were afraid of him, so that he was able to keep robbers from stealing the King's goods when Aleff was away.

Not only were Aleff's enemies afraid of Ironhook, but the King himself was hardly master of his own house, and all the men of his Court were afraid of the giant also.

And now Ironhook said that he was going to marry

the King's beautiful daughter. The Princess hated the ugly fellow, but neither she nor the King dared to offend him.

When all this was told to Hereward, he was very angry.

"I shall kill this brutal giant," he told Martin.

"If you can!" said Martin.

Hereward was quite sure that he could, and only waited for a chance to pick a quarrel.

The same evening the King, the Princess, and all the Court, sat down to dinner as before. Even as on the previous night, everybody except Hereward and Martin drank deeply, and the ugly giant more than any.

Ironhook, being very drunk, began to boast of his brave deeds. Hearing that Hereward was an Englishman, he sneered at him.

"Englishmen are nothing," said he. "I have killed three of them myself with one blow."

"With your mouth, I suppose," said Hereward.

"What do you mean?" roared the giant.

"The three Englishmen that you killed with one blow never lived as men," said Hereward. "They were words that came from your mouth, and you killed them with your breath!"

Then the giant roared with anger, and made a rush at Hereward, shouting that he would kill him.

Hereward replied that he was willing to fight him at any time he pleased, so long as he fought fairly. The two made arrangements to meet together on the morrow, and fight a battle to the death.

That night Hereward went to a priest to confess his sins. When the priest heard that he was going to fight Ironhook, he was very sorry. "He will surely kill you!" he said. Martin Lightfoot also tried to persuade his master to go away, and to leave the fellow to himself, but Hereward would not. Then Martin offered to help his master to fight Ironhook. But Hereward refused, saying that he would fight fairly, man to man.

Alone in her room, the beautiful Princess wept sorely to think that the handsome stranger was going to meet his death. "Oh, if I could only help him!" she thought.

Then she had an idea. She stole quietly to the giant's room, and took away his great sword, and brought it to her own chamber, and hid it in a safe place.

Early next morning Hereward went out to meet the giant. He was armed with sword and short spear, and he wore a strong coat of mail. Ironhook had spent quite a long time searching for his sword. He was mad with anger because he could not find it, and as soon as he saw Hereward he rushed fiercely upon him.

Hereward dodged to one side, and threw his javelin. It penetrated through a joint of Ironhook's armour, and caused a slight wound. The pain added to the giant's fury. He was so angry that he struck wild blows, and Hereward had no difficulty in keeping out of harm's way.

At last the Englishman saw his chance. He rushed in and buried his sword in the body of the ugly fellow.

The giant fell to the ground dead, and Hereward had won the fight.

Then everybody was glad, except those who had been the giant's friends. And the beautiful Princess was more glad than any, because now she would not have to marry the cruel brute whom she hated so much.

Hereward did not remain very long with Aleff, the Cornish King. He returned to the ship in which he had come, and sailed away to Ireland. He spent some time there fighting for one of the Irish Kings, and then went to Flanders.

III.—HEREWARD RETURNS TO HIS OWN COUNTRY.

Hereward remained in Flanders for several years. Many were the battles he fought, and many the adventures he saw. We have no space here to tell of all his mighty deeds. His fame spread even to England.

The people in his own village of Bourne, in the Fen Country, heard of the great warrior, Hereward the Wake, whose name was in everybody's mouth. They thought of the naughty boy who had caused his mother such trouble, and of the bad deed for which he had been outlawed; and they were glad to think that Hereward was bringing honour to his name, for at one time they were afraid that he would disgrace it.

While Hereward was away in Flanders great changes had taken place in England. Edward the Confessor, the good King, was dead, and the lion-hearted Harold

had become King in his place. One day the news was brought to Hereward that William the Norman had invaded England, and that Harold had been killed at the Battle of Hastings.

Terrible tales were told of the way the Normans were treating the Englishmen. Hereward listened to stories of Saxon nobles whose lands had been taken from them and given to low-born Norman soldiers. He heard that all the Fen Country had been given to a Norman named Ivo the Woodcutter, a harsh and cruel man.

His heart filled with pity for his fellow-countrymen as he listened to all these tales, but the worst was yet to come.

For the messenger went on to say that Godiva, Hereward's mother, and his little brother Godwin were in great danger. Their lands and houses had been given by the Woodcutter to one of his cooks, and even now he was about to take possession of them.

Immediately he heard this Hereward set out for England. He could have gone with an army at his back had he wished to do so, but he went accompanied only by Martin Lightfoot.

Once in England, the two set out in hot haste for Bourne, where Hereward's mother lived. Late in the evening he came to his own village, and rode through its deserted street.

What a change had been made since he went away ! Hereward looked round him at all the familiar sights. He saw the houses of the people he knew so well, the fields in which he used to play. But now all was quiet. No person walked along the street, no housewives stood

chattering at their doors. Doors and windows were fast shuttered and barred. Hardly a light was to be seen, although it was late. The village seemed almost a place of the dead.

Hereward dismounted from his horse at the door of a house, and knocked. It was the house of one of his father's friends, so that he felt sure of a welcome. For some time no answer came. Hereward knocked again, and then a voice sounded from within asking who was there.

Hereward did not want to say who he was, so he answered that it was two strangers from Flanders, who sought shelter from the Normans.

Then the door was opened, and Hereward bade to enter. His father's friend, now an old, old man, sat in the corner of the room before the smoky fire, holding his white head between his hands.

"Ah, if Hereward would only come home!" he moaned; and then again: "Ah, if Hereward would only come!"

Hereward, keeping his face well muffled, and speaking in a thick voice, asked for news. Terrible indeed was the tale the Englishman had to tell.

The Normans had forced their way into his mother's house. Godwin, his little brother, a boy of sixteen years, had tried to keep them away. Drawing his sword, he had stood before the door of his mother's room and fought the Normans; but in the end they had killed him, and set his head on the gable of the house.

A tear stood in Hereward's eye as he remembered the baby-brother he had left at home so many years

ago. He was dead now, and Hereward would never be able to teach him to be a soldier. Yet Hereward was glad that Godwin had died a hero's death.

And then his face grew stern. He called to Martin, and the two went out into the dark. Through the well-known lanes they went until they came to the old house. Hereward stood a while gazing at it before he strode forward.

All the windows were brilliantly lighted, and from within came the sound of singing. The Normans were making merry.

"Look !" said Martin, and pointed to a ladder that the Normans had left lying in the yard.

Hereward seized it, set it against the wall of the house, and mounted. Very tenderly he took the head of his brother from the gable, and wrapped it up in his cloak ; then he looked through one of the windows.

What a sight met his eyes ! The room was full of Normans. On the broad oak table was placed all the gold and silver plate belonging to Hereward's mother. The cups were full of wine, and the Normans were shouting and laughing. Some of them were making jokes about the English. The fat cook lolled at the end of the table, and laughed louder than any of the others.

Hereward's face grew hard and stern. He got down quickly from the ladder, and returned to Martin Lightfoot. The two of them placed the ladder across the front-door, so that anybody who rushed out would fall over it. Martin Lightfoot, armed with an axe, stood at the side by the wall.

Then Hereward drew his sword. With one leap he

entered the hall, shouting his war-cry : " A Wake ! a Wake ! Hereward for England ! "

The Normans were taken by surprise. They seized the heavy golden cups, and used them as weapons. Some fled to the door, only to fall over the ladder and be killed by Martin, who waited for them there.

Hereward's great sword rose and fell. Each time he struck, a man went down. In a very few minutes the fight was over, for there was not a Norman of them all left alive.

Next morning, in place of Godwin's head, the heads of fifteen Normans were upon the roof of the house at Bourne.

IV.—THE CAMP OF REFUGE.

The news of Hereward's deed soon spread over the whole of the Fen Country. Men told each other that all was well now, for Hereward had come again. Hundreds of Saxons came to him, and begged that he would lead them against the Norman invaders.

The first thing Hereward did was to send messages to all parts of the country. In a short time he had got together a large army of men.

King William was not finding it very easy to hold the land he had won at Hastings. In the North of England Edwin and Morcar, Hereward's nephews, were fighting bravely. In many other parts of the country the people refused to recognize William as their King.

To make the Conqueror's difficulties greater, a fleet of Danish ships appeared off the east coast. The

Danish King, Sweyn, was in charge of this fleet, and he did much damage to the coast towns. Hereward hoped that he might be able to join Sweyn, and that between them they might drive the Normans from the land.

William, however, was not only a great fighter, but he was a very clever man. He saw that he could not fight two enemies at the same time ; so he rode to the coast, and offered the Danes a large sum of money if they would go away. Sweyn took the money, and went.

Then William marched upon the rebel cities of the North. He burned the towns and slew men, women, and children. For more than fifty years afterwards the land north of York was nothing but a dreary waste.

Hereward now saw that he had nothing to hope for from the Danes, and he determined to hold out against the Normans as long as he had a man to back him. Followed by all his men, he fled to the Isle of Ely, and there made a camp of refuge.

Ely was then an island in the flat Fen Country, surrounded by broad rivers and lakes. During the rainy season the whole of the country near it was covered with water, except the highest parts of the land. When the summer came, and the sun shone, the waters went down, and left great spaces of marsh-land.

Unhappy was the traveller who lost his way in these wastes. Some of the marshes were covered with green, so that they seemed firm and safe ; but no sooner did the traveller step upon such land than his feet sank in the soft ooze. All his struggles to get free only made

him sink the quicker, and soon the black mud closed over his head.

The Fens have been drained now. Long ditches, called dykes, have been cut to carry off the water. Where once there was nothing but a treacherous marsh there are now green smiling corn-fields and rich pastures.

The Isle of Ely had always been made a camp of refuge. The Britons fled there when the Romans came over the seas. After the Romans had returned to their own country the Britons came there to hide from the fury of the fierce followers of Hengist and Horsa ; and, when the Danes came, in the time of Alfred, the Saxons in their turn sought safety in the Fen Country.

Ely was so called from the great numbers of willow-trees that grew there. "Elig" is a British name for the willow. These trees grew everywhere in the Fens. They shaded the deep and stagnant pools ; they lined the edges of the sluggish, winding streams.

On the highest part of the island was built Ely Abbey—the same to which Canute had come to hear the monks sing. It was a stately church built of stone.

The people who lived in the Fens knew all the paths that led to the island. They crossed the rivers and lakes in flat-bottomed boats, which could float equally well in deep or shallow water. Travellers on foot carried long jumping-poles, with which they leaped across the ditches.

There was enough food in the Fens to feed many thousands of men. The rivers were full of eels and pike. From the lakes and ponds men were able to

take hundreds of tench and carp. The reeds teemed with water-fowl. He who tired of fish could have flesh for his dinner, for there were thousands of wild-duck, and cranes, herons, teal, and snipe besides.

The Saxon chiefs and nobles who flocked to Hereward's banner lived within the abbey. There every evening they met in the great hall at dinner. At the head of the table sat stalwart Abbot Thurstan, who had sworn to die rather than give up his church to Norman priests.

Nearly all the chiefs who thus sat at Thurstan's board had once been rich men, but now they had no homes to call their own, for the invaders had driven them from their houses and lands.

The rest of the men belonging to Hereward's army lodged outside the abbey walls in rough huts or tents. At night the flare of many camp-fires could be seen, and round each fire clustered a crowd of sturdy men.

Such was the camp of refuge which Hereward made in Ely.

Many times did William attempt to take this camp. He had conquered all the rest of England, and he was very angry that the people of the Fens should stand out against him ; so he commanded Ivo the Woodcutter to take a large army and drive these rebels out.

This was easier said than done. Ivo made a brave attempt. He brought a great many planks of wood, and built a long bridge over the soft marshes. Hereward allowed him to build it in peace.

When the bridge was finished, the Norman soldiers

stepped upon it to make their way into the camp. They came eagerly enough, for they had been told that there was great treasure in the Abbey of Ely, and each man was anxious to get his share of it.

At first all was well. The soldiers, all in order, marched along the bridge. It shook a little, but bore their weight. Then more and more men came on. Those behind began to crowd those in front, for nothing had been seen of the Saxons, and the Normans began to think that their foes had run away.

Suddenly a flight of arrows came from the reeds at the edge of the marsh. The foremost Normans gave way, while those behind pressed on. Then a scene of the most terrible confusion took place. Crowded together on the narrow bridge, the Normans were shot down. Hundreds of them were pushed into the water and drowned, and the rest fled.

When William heard what had happened, he sent another force. Almost the same thing happened. Then for a time the Englishmen were left in peace.

V.—HEREWARD VISITS KING WILLIAM.

For some months the Normans did not make another attack upon the camp of refuge, and Hereward began to wonder what was in King William's mind.

Was he going to starve them out? He would have to wait a very long time before he did that. Did he intend to make another attack?

Hereward felt that, anyhow, he would like to know

just what William did intend to do. He thought for a long time, wondering how he could do this, and at last he hit upon a plan.

Hereward had a horse named Mare Swallow. She was an ugly-looking beast. No man would ever have looked at her twice, unless he was a good judge of horses. But, in spite of her ugliness, she was one of the swiftest steeds ever known. She could gallop like the wind. Many a time had she carried her master into battle, so that she was used to the clash of arms, and not easily frightened. She knew Hereward so well that she would come to him when he called and obey his every word.

One morning Hereward told his men to put a rough saddle upon Mare Swallow ; then he commanded them to cut off his own long yellow hair, and to rub his face and hands with a brown stain, so as to hide the whiteness of his skin. He put off his leathern coat, and put on a dirty ragged suit of clothes which had belonged to a peasant.

Thus dressed, Hereward mounted Mare Swallow and set out for William's camp near Cambridge.

When he had gone some distance along the high-road he met a potter jogging along on a pony with his earthenware pots upon his back. Hereward stopped the man, and asked him to lend him his pots.

The man grumbled and refused ; so Hereward knocked him off his pony, and took the pots away from him by force ; then, giving him a piece of money, he rode on quickly.

Soon he came near the Norman camp. He reined in Mare Swallow to a slow pace, and advanced toward

the royal stables, calling out at the top of his voice :
“ Good pots and pans ! good pots and pans ! Does anybody want good pots and pans ? ”

All William's servants came tumbling out to see the stranger. When they spied Hereward, with his dirty face and his ragged clothes, they began to laugh and jeer at him. They pointed to his horse, and laughed at her ugliness.

“ Look at her long nose ! ” said one.

“ And her skinny legs ! ” said another.

Then they all crowded round Hereward, pushing him from side to side.

Hereward looked as stupid as he could. When any one of the men asked him a question, all he would answer was : “ Does anybody want good pots and pans ? ”

At last one of the Norman nobles came out to see what all the noise was about. When he saw Hereward, he looked at him very closely.

“ You are very like that villain Hereward, ” he said. “ If it were not for your brown face and your short hair I should say that you were Hereward himself. ”

Hereward pretended that he could not understand what was being said, and looked more stupid than ever.

“ Take him to the kitchen, ” said the Norman knight.
“ Give him a good feed, and watch him well. ”

Hereward went with the servants to the kitchen. They gave him meat and wine. He ate the food as if he had not had a meal for a week. Then the servants laughed even more.

As he ate his dinner he heard them talking about a great attack which William was going to make upon Ely. He heard that a large army was being gathered, and that the King meant to drive a causeway right into the heart of the Fens.

When the meal was over, the servants began to think that they would have some fun with the simple potter.

“Let us blindfold him,” said one, “and then tie him in the midst of his pots. What a fine smash there will be !”

The others received the idea with great delight. They rushed upon Hereward to do as they had said.

But a big surprise was in store for them. Hereward sprang up, jumped to the fireplace, seized the heavy spit that was there, and stood with his back to the wall, ready to defend himself.

The servants, still laughing, came at him ; but they did not laugh very long, for he struck the first that came such a blow upon his crown that he went down like a log.

The servants drew their knives, and fiercely attacked the stranger. Hereward fought bravely, whirling the heavy wooden spit above his head ; but there were too many against him, and at last he was taken and bound.

Upstairs to William’s hall they carried him, and told their tale to the King. Of course, they did not tell it quite truly, and William, who was a just man, soon showed that he did not believe them.

“Why,” he said, looking at Hereward, “this is the

fellow that was said to be like Hereward. Do you know that man, my friend ?”

Hereward pretended to be very greatly frightened.

“Do not speak to me of Hereward !” he mumbled. “He is a villain ! Only yesterday he stole one of my cows.”

William looked closely at him. He saw that his arms were covered with the scars of old wounds. Now, potters do not usually fight in battles, nor was it likely that a man who was only a potter would have defended himself so well against the Norman servants. William was suspicious.

Hereward’s heart sank, but he met the King’s piercing glance boldly enough. At last the King ordered that Hereward should be taken away, and carefully guarded until he returned from hunting.

So they took Hereward away, and locked him up in a stable. After a while one of the servants came to put chains upon his ankles.

“Hold up your leg !” he shouted.

Hereward did so, and as the man knelt to put on the irons he gave him such a kick in the chest that he fell sprawling backward on the floor.

Then Hereward sprang up, and rushed to the door. He climbed the wall of the stable-yard nimbly, and called to Mare Swallow. She had been tied up by the Normans, but at the sound of her loved master’s voice she snapped the rope, and came running towards him.

Quickly Hereward jumps upon her back. Who can stop him now ? Behind, the servants shout and bawl, and bring out their steeds and ride in pursuit,

And Hereward looks back upon them and laughs, shouting his war-cry : “ A Wake ! a Wake ! Hereward for England ! ”

Over the ditches and fields and brooks flies Mare Swallow, leaving the Normans far behind. And soon Hereward comes again to Ely, and tells his men to get ready for the great attack which William is about to make.

VI.—THE END OF THE STRUGGLE.

King William brought up his army to make a mighty attack upon Ely. He caused his men to bring timber and stones, and bricks. He sent for skilful workmen to come from across the sea, and told them to build him a broad road right into the heart of the Fens.

When the Saxons saw the great number of soldiers that William had brought with him, some of them lost heart. “ The struggle is over now,” they said. “ Not even our brave Hereward will be able to hold out much longer ! ”

But Hereward never lost heart. He did all he could to prevent the Normans from building the road. Once he dressed himself as a labourer, went to one of the Norman foremen, and was employed as a workman. All day long he laboured with the others. At the end of the day he set fire to the work, and destroyed all that had been done.

At other times he led his men through the willows, and hid them behind the thick rushes ; then, when the Normans came, he fell upon them, and drove them away.

But King William was a man who never gave up. He meant to build that road, and build it he did. At last it was finished, and all was ready for the Norman troops to march into Ely.

The armed men came up, some on foot, and some in boats and barges. William was there to lead the army himself.

At the end of the road the Normans had built a tall wooden tower. In this tower they had put an old woman, who was supposed to be a witch. They thought that she would be able to prevent the Saxons from fighting by her charms. It was, of course, a silly thing to believe, but in those days men were not taught so well as we are, and they believed in all sorts of foolish things.

Well, there was the witch in her tower. She stood up and waved her arms and shrieked at the Saxons.

Duke William led his army across the road that he had made. The Norman soldiers came on, hundreds of them, and were met by flights of arrows from the Saxons.

Suddenly a cry of fear arose in the Norman ranks. A thin line of fire ran quickly down on either side of the road. Hereward's men had set the reeds on fire!

The reeds were as dry as tinder, for there had been no rain for many weeks. A strong wind was blowing, which fanned the flames. Soon the spaces on either side of the road were like roaring walls of flame. The dense smoke rolled before the wind; the sparks flew, and carried the fire even farther afield.

Now the timbers of the road itself were burning. William's men, in one frightened mass, turned to flee. At the top of her tower the witch was still waving her arms and shrieking, but this time in fear. Soon the posts of the tower were burnt through, and she fell to the ground.

When the flames died down, and the smoke cleared away, not a Norman was to be seen. The charred timbers of the road still smoked. The Normans would never cross it again.

That was William's last attack upon the camp of refuge. But William never gave up. Having failed in one way, he tried another. He sent spies and messengers, and offered rich rewards to anyone who would lead his army across the Fens to the camp.

He did not have far to seek ; for, alas ! there were men among Hereward's followers who were ready to take the Norman money. They were tired of the hard life they led. The stock of bread upon the island had given out. For weeks they had had nothing but fish to eat. They thought they would be better off if William conquered.

So one dark night, when Hereward was away in another part of the country, these traitors led the Norman army into their camp. The Saxons were taken by surprise, and could hardly strike a blow. The long struggle was ended.

Hereward came back too late. He fought bravely with the Normans, but in the end was forced to flee to save his life.

King William loved a brave man, such as Hereward had proved himself to be, and he promised that if

Hereward came to him he would forgive him, and give him back all his lands.

In the end Hereward agreed. He rode to the Conqueror's Court, and William received him gladly.

He lived for a good many years afterwards in peace with his neighbours, and when he had reached a ripe old age he died



THE SEALING OF MAGNA CHARTA.

(Ernest Normand From the picture in the Royal Exchange, by kind permission of the artist.)

STEPHEN LANGTON.

IN one of the glass cases at the British Museum you may see an old sheet of parchment. It is yellow and shrivelled with age, the ink upon it is brown and faded, and it is covered with Latin writing, very difficult to read.

Every day many people stop before the glass case in which this sheet of parchment is kept. They look at it with interest, and point it out to each other ; for that sheet of yellow parchment, with the royal seal still hanging from it, is a copy of the Great Charter, and it is upon the laws of the Great Charter that English liberty is founded.

This is the story of how that Charter was obtained.

King John had been on the throne of England for six years, and already everybody hated him. He was thoroughly worthless. Although he had great gifts and was very clever, he used his cleverness only in finding out ways to do evil. He was a cruel man, and, like most cruel people, cowardly too. It was said that he had caused his own nephew, Prince Arthur, to be murdered.

In 1205 the Archbishop of Canterbury, whose name was Hubert Walter, died. He had been a very able man, and had ruled wisely and well. The monks of

Canterbury wanted to choose one of their own number to take his place.

King John thought that this was a good chance to give the place to one of his own friends. He chose a man, and sent sixteen monks to the Pope to get him to agree.

Stephen Langton at this time was living with the Pope in Rome. The two were very great friends, and had known each other many years. We do not know where Stephen Langton was born, or anything at all about his early life. We only know that he was an Englishman, that he was very learned, and that he had written books. He had studied in Paris, and had been master in a great college there.

Instead of agreeing to appoint the King's friend as Archbishop of Canterbury, the Pope gave the position to Stephen Langton. He could not have chosen a better man. Still, he was quite wrong in doing this without asking the King's consent.

When John heard the news, he was very angry. He vowed that Langton should never be allowed to land in England. "Who is this man?" he wrote to the Pope. "I have never heard of him! He shall not come into my country!"

Then the Pope punished the King by forbidding any priest to hold a service in England. All the churches were closed. Even the dead were buried in silence. The people of England thought that God no longer watched over their country.

Still the King would not give in. He punished the priests who obeyed the Pope. One of them was crushed to death under a heavy block of lead. Once a Welsh-

man was brought before him, charged with killing a priest. "Let him go," said John. "He has killed my enemy!"

Seeing that John's heart was still hard, the Pope excommunicated him. This meant that no Christian people were to have anything to do with him. His subjects were no longer obliged to obey him. It would be considered a good act to make war upon him and kill him.

The Pope declared that John was not fit to be King. Philip of France was told to take an army and tear him from the throne.

Then John became really frightened. Perhaps his own people would rise, and put another King in his place! So he determined to make peace.

He sent to the Pope, and told him that he would allow Stephen Langton to come to England. But he did more than this. He gave up his kingdom to the Pope, and received it back as the Pope's vassal. Every year he had to pay the Pope a large sum of money, just as though England belonged to Rome.

During the time that John had been quarrelling with the Pope Stephen Langton remained quietly in France. He busied himself with writing books. We still profit by one of his works, for it was he who divided the Bible into chapters.

He now came to England, and landed near Portsmouth. John went to meet him, and as soon as he saw the Archbishop he threw himself on the ground at his feet. With tears in his eyes, he begged Stephen Langton to forgive him. The good priest felt sorry

for the King. He raised him to his feet, and did not deny him his blessing.

Soon afterwards John went to France to fight King Philip. The French won a victory at Bouvines, and John returned to England once more.

For a long time the people and the Barons had been very discontented. John had been so cruel, and had ruled so badly, that there was great misery in the country. While the King was away in France, the Barons met together and drew up a plan to make him rule more justly.

With Stephen Langton at their head, they went to the King, and showed him a list of rules which they wished him to sign. John read them through. "Why, these rules are pure nonsense!" he said. "They will ask me for my crown next!"

Whether the rules were pure nonsense or not, John soon found that he would have to agree to them. Not only were the Barons against him, but almost every single man in the land.

The King appointed a certain day when he would meet Stephen Langton and the Barons to talk matters over. On June 15, 1215, a camp was formed on an island in the River Thames. The King remained on one bank of the river; the Barons took up their position in a meadow known as Runnymede on the other bank.

The Barons were in full armour, and attended by their men. The King could quite plainly see that they meant to force him to do their will.

The rules were read over to him. "No man," said one of them, "shall be arrested or imprisoned unless

he has been tried and found guilty by the law of the land."

Another rule stated : " To no man will we sell, deny, or delay right or justice."

With anger in his heart but a smile on his lip, John fixed his royal seal to the parchment on which these laws were written. When he reached his palace he threw himself on the ground in a fit of mad fury. He gnashed his teeth, and gnawed the straw which covered the floor.

How bitterly he hated Stephen Langton, and all those who had made him promise to be a better King !

Not for a moment did he mean to keep his promises. He went to war with his Barons, and a year later he died.

And what became of Stephen Langton ? Well, the Pope was not pleased because he had led the Barons against John. Stephen did not mind that, however. He went on doing his duty, like the truly great man he was. After a life of great usefulness, he died in 1228, and was buried in Canterbury Cathedral. If you go there, you may see his tomb.

We have now read of three Archbishops who opposed their Kings, but the very greatest of them all is Stephen Langton ; for the work he did seven hundred years ago benefits every Englishman to-day.



SIMON DE MONTFORT.

(From the Reredos in Cheltenham College Chapel.)

SIMON DE MONTFORT.

I.—EARLY LIFE.

WE often hear our country spoken of as a "free" country. We know that in England no man suffers under unjust laws. We know also that no man may be imprisoned unless he has been fairly tried, and has been proved guilty of a crime. The very poorest man has the right to justice, as well as the richest in the land, and the people themselves make the laws by which they are governed.

Our country was not always so free as it is now. If you read your history, you will find that in early times men were often oppressed by their Kings, and robbed and ill-treated by nobles who were more powerful than they. Liberty has not come all at once. Many men have fought and died in order to secure it for those that came after them. It is the story of one of these men that we are now going to tell.

Simon de Montfort was the son of a rich and powerful French nobleman. He spent nearly all of his youth in France, living in his father's castle. We do not know much about his early life, except that he was a strong and handsome boy, a little hot-tempered sometimes, but generally good-natured and happy.

When he was twenty-four years old, Simon made up his mind to try his fortunes in England. Through his mother he was heir to the earldom of Leicester, with its splendid castle and vast extent of forest-land. He came to England to claim this estate, and was taken into favour by the King, Henry III.

In 1238 Simon married Eleanor, the daughter of King John, and the sister of Henry III. This marriage had been arranged without the knowledge or consent of the English Barons, and when they heard of it they were very angry indeed. The King, they said, had no right to do a thing of such great importance without consulting them.

As soon as he found that the feeling of the Barons was against him, Henry, who was a most unfaithful friend, turned round upon Simon and quarrelled with him. Simon was forced to leave the country by stealth, and he went to Rome to get the Pope's consent to his marriage.

Let us now for a moment glance at the condition of things in England.

Henry III. was a weak, vain man, utterly worthless as a King. He thought of little else but spending money on fine clothes and feasts. He had invited many Frenchmen over from France. These men he gathered round him at Court. He listened to their advice, and gave them rich presents of money and lands.

You remember that King John had made himself the vassal of the Pope, and had promised to pay him a large sum of money every year. The Pope still claimed this money, and Henry was forced to pay

it. To get the money he put heavy taxes upon the people.

As time went on, the numbers of foreign favourites in England grew greater and greater. "They poured into the country as into a newly-discovered gold-field." They were given the highest, the most valuable, and most powerful positions in the kingdom. They took all they could get, and surrounded the King at Court like a crowd of hungry beggars.

One of the Queen's uncles, Peter of Savoy, was given a piece of land in London between the Strand and the River Thames. This piece of land is called the "Savoy" to this day.

These foreign favourites advised the King to make war upon France in order to get back the French provinces which had been lost in the reign of John. He did so, and was unsuccessful. By this means more money was wasted, and new taxes were put upon the people.

The King was always begging for money. He was said to be the sturdiest beggar in the land. Wherever he went, a crowd of people to whom he owed money followed him. He owed more than he could ever pay, for his debts were greater than his total income.

When Henry went to the Barons to ask for money, they gave it to him on condition that he ruled more justly. He always promised to do so, but as soon as he got the money he forgot all about his promises, and ruled as badly as before.

At last, in 1244, the Barons met together in a Council, and told the King of the evil he was doing. They reminded him of his many promises to rule

according to the laws of Magna Charta, and they refused to give him any more money.

This Council, or Parliament, as such meetings were beginning to be called, was attended by Simon de Montfort. He had returned to England, and was once again the King's friend. Simon supported the Barons. From that time onward Henry hated all Parliaments, and he began to hate Simon de Montfort too.

II.—SIMON DE MONTFORT AS GOVERNOR OF GASCONY.

Henry III. was master of a land called Gascony, which is situated in the South of France. The nobles of this land built themselves strong castles, and lived by robbing the peaceful folk of the country and travellers from the towns.

Knowing that Earl Simon was a stern and determined man, the King sent him to govern this country.

"The Gascons," he said, "are full of wicked pride. You must go and break this pride, and trample my enemies under your feet, so that I may never more be troubled with them."

Simon at once set out to do the King's will. Henry had given him money to pay his soldiers, but Simon found that he needed more. So he cut down the trees in his forests and sold them.

When he arrived in Gascony, he found the country in a very troubled state. Simon, however, soon showed that he meant to have peace and order. He told the robber-nobles that if they did not cease from

troubling the people he would hang them. Of course, many of these robbers only laughed at his threats. Simon marched upon them with an army, and defeated them in more than one battle. He took one of the most powerful nobles prisoner, and sent him home to beg forgiveness from the King.

Before Simon had finished his task his money came to an end. He knew that it was no use trying to go on without money, for his soldiers would not fight unless they were paid ; so, three years after he had gone out, he came back to England. He arrived worn out, with only three men-at-arms at his back.

He immediately went to the King and asked for money. He got a little, added some more of his own to it, and went to Gascony again.

Now, the nobles of Gascony were not at all pleased with the way they had been treated. Simon always took the part of the weak against the strong, of the poor against those who would rob them. The nobles hated him for this. They made plots to kill him, but he was so watchful that they could not succeed in their wicked plans.

But they had made up their minds to get rid of him in some way or other ; so they sent to the King, and charged the Earl with cruelty towards them. They said that he had put innocent men in prison, that he had starved men to death, and that he had tortured men to make them give up their money to him.

None of these things were true. But the weak and foolish Henry was ready to believe them all. He sent

to Simon, and asked him what he had to say for himself.

Simon's answer was short and to the point.

"Nothing," he said. "The Gascons have proved themselves unfaithful. Why, then, do you trust their word rather than mine?"

Still the King was not satisfied, and in the end Simon hurried home to defend the honour of his name. The Gascons had sent a number of priests and nobles to charge him before the King. A day was set for the case to be tried, and when that day came Simon boldly faced his accusers.

Nearly all the chief Barons of England were present at the trial, and most of them were on Simon's side.

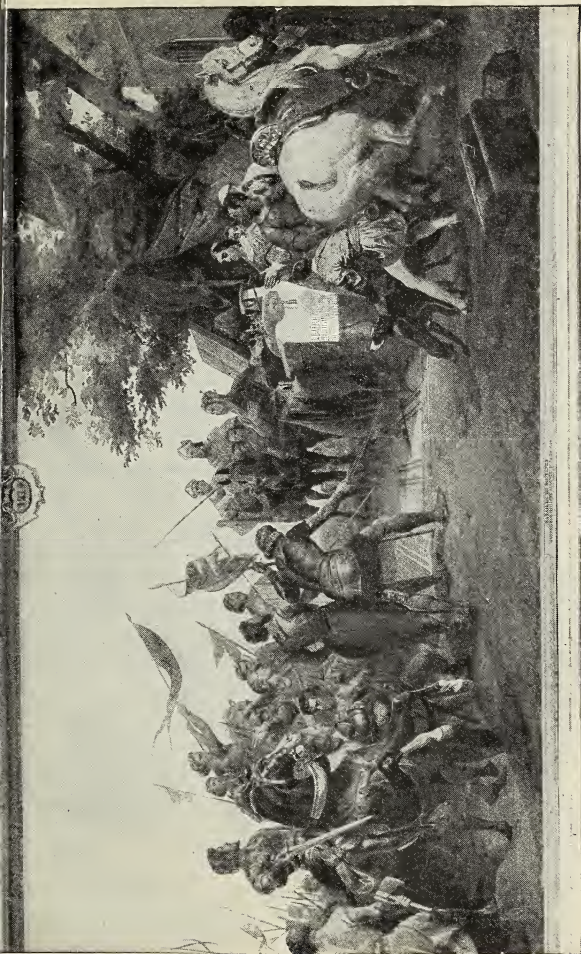
A French Archbishop first spoke, and repeated the charges. He told the King that, unless he punished Simon, the Gascons would rebel against him. Foolish Henry, instead of helping his faithful servant, spoke against him. Then Simon spoke.

"My lord King," he said, "your words should be worthy of trust. Keep your promise to me, and repay me the money I have spent in your service; for it is well known that I have made myself a poor man in defence of your honour."

"I keep no promises with a traitor," said the King.

"That word is a lie," exclaimed Simon, starting up in anger, "and but that you were called King, bitterly should you repent ever having uttered it!"

When he heard this, the King was beside himself with rage.



THE BATTLE OF ROUVINES.

(From the painting by H. Vernet. Neurdein, Photo.)

“ I never repented anything so much,” he cried, “ as I now repent of ever having allowed you to enter England, or to hold any land or honours in that country.”

Perhaps there would have been a terrible quarrel, for Simon feared nobody ; but the nobles stepped in and prevented it. Then the King said :

“ Go back to Gascony, you lover and maker of strife ! Go back and meet the fate you deserve.” For he hoped that Simon would be killed.

Simon answered boldly. “ I will go back,” he said, “ and, ungrateful as you are, I will yet make your enemies your footstool.”

He returned to Gascony, and did much to keep the country in order ; but King Henry never forgave him, and soon afterwards dismissed him from his post.

III.—THE BARONS' WAR.

Meanwhile in England things had been going from bad to worse. Although the King time after time promised to keep the laws and rule justly, he never did so. The people were taxed so heavily that murmurs arose in every part of the country.

The foreigners were still at the King's Court. He gave them the money which he had wrung from his subjects. The King's servants were never paid. Some of them began to get their living by robbing the people.

The Barons tried to make the King rule in a better way, but they had nobody to lead them or show them what to do. When Simon returned, however, he proved

that, although he was French by birth, he was English at heart. He took up the people's cause, and became the leader of the Barons.

If the King had hated Simon before, he hated him even more now, for fear was joined to hate. One day, while the King was sailing on the Thames, a thunderstorm came on. The King took refuge in a house on the bank, and there he met Simon de Montfort.

Simon greeted the King respectfully. He told him not to fear, for the thunderstorm was passing away and would soon be over.

"If I fear the thunder!" burst out the King. "I fear you, Sir Earl, more than all the thunder in the world!"

"Fear your enemies, my lord King," was the quiet reply. "Fear those who flatter you and foolishly advise you, rather than me. For I am always faithful to you and yours, and to the kingdom of England."

At this time the misery of the people was made worse by a great famine. The crops failed; wheat rose in price. The poor people could not buy food, and hundreds of them died.

The Barons, with Simon at their head, decided that something was to be done. They called together all the men from their estates, armed them well, and so provided themselves with a large army.

Then they went to meet the King at a Parliament in the city of Oxford. When Henry entered the room where his Barons were, he was surprised to find them in full armour, with swords by their sides.

“What is this?” he asked in fear. “Am I, then, a prisoner?”

“Not so,” replied one of the Barons. “You are still our King. We are even going to give you more money. But we are tired of promises. We must have something better than words. We have drawn up some rules for you to sign. They are made for the common good of yourself and your people.”

The King saw that if he did not willingly do as he was asked, he would be made to do so. He therefore signed the parchment.

The laws that were written there were known as the Provisions (or rules) of Oxford, because they were drawn up in that city. By signing them the King agreed that the Great Council of the country should meet three times a year, instead of only when he wished, as before. Another rule said that a council of fifteen Barons should be formed to decide what money was to be given to the King.

The notice telling the people that these laws had been made was the first one since the Conquest to be drawn up in English. All the others had been written in French or Latin. This is important, for it shows that the Barons thought that the people had a right to know how the country was being governed. The King's friends called the Council which drew up these laws the “Mad Parliament.”

The first result of these laws was that the foreigners left the country. England was not a pleasant place for them now that power was in the hands of English Barons who hated them. The next result was civil war.

Some of the Barons became jealous of Simon. They began to quarrel with him. Henry was quick to turn this to his advantage. He obtained leave from the Pope to break his oath, gathered an army, and went to war with the Barons. A battle was fought at Lewes. Simon won the victory, and the King and his son, Prince Edward, were taken prisoner.

Simon was now the most powerful man in all the land. Although so many of the Barons had deserted him, the people of the towns supported him almost to a man. A new spirit of learning had come upon them. The Friars—those monks who had no place to live in and no worldly goods—had been among them preaching and teaching. Englishmen were beginning to see that they had the right to take part in their own government.

In London the common people rebelled. They went to the Tower, where Queen Eleanor had retired for safety. When she tried to escape by the river the angry crowd drove her back. Stones and rotten eggs were thrown at her from the bridges. “Drown the witch!” shouted the people. So she was forced to return in fear and anger.

But now troubles began to come upon the good Earl. Most of the Barons, and even some of the people, were not pleased because the King was a prisoner. They began to sneer at Simon. They called this man, who had proved himself the finest Englishman among them, “Foreigner!” They said that he wished to become King of England himself.

Then Simon did something that had never been done before. Seeing that the Barons were against him, he

sent for two citizens from every large town to come together in a Parliament and talk over affairs of government.

This was the first time that the common people had ever formed a part of the Great Council of England. Simon's Parliament of 1265 gave us the first House of Commons.

IV.—THE BATTLE OF EVESHAM.

Prince Edward had all this time been kept a prisoner at Hereford.

One day he asked his guards to go with him on horseback to a field outside the city. Once there, he fell to talking about the speed of their horses.

"Let us see which is the swiftest," said he.

So the guards began to run races. When their horses were tired out, Prince Edward jumped upon his own steed and galloped away. The guards tried to catch him, but their horses were so weary that Edward had no difficulty in keeping ahead.

"Farewell!" cried the Prince, turning round to laugh at his pursuers. "When you see the King, my father, tell him I will soon set him free!"

Edward was a very skilful captain, although he was so young, for he had been taught to be a soldier by Simon de Montfort himself. He took command of an army, marched to the River Severn, and captured the town of Gloucester. Simon brought his army to Evesham, and there Edward came to meet him.

Evesham is a little town in a bend of the River

Avon. Simon was expecting help from his son, and, from a church steeple, kept up a keen watch for him. At last, far off down the road, thick clouds of dust were seen. "Go up to the top of the tower," said Simon to one of his men, "watch there, and return to tell me if it is my son who comes."

The man went and came back trembling. He had seen the lions of England on the flying banners. "We are all dead men, my lord," he said; "it is the Prince."

Then Simon turned to his friends, and told them to flee before it was too late. "If you die," was the noble answer, "we have no wish to live."

"Then let us commend our souls to God," said Simon, "for our bodies belong to the enemy."

As Edward's army drew nearer he admired the order of the men. "They come on in a wise fashion," he said sadly, "but they learnt it from me."

The two armies now came together. Edward had many knights clad in armour and well armed. Most of Simon's men were poor peasants and ragged Welshmen. At the first charge they fled in all directions. Some of them were pursued to a cornfield near by and killed like sheep.

The best of Simon's men stood round their chief, prepared to sell their lives dearly. It was here that the fight was thickest. In one of the charges a knight in armour was pushed from his horse. One of Edward's men went to end his life. "Hold your hand," said a frightened voice; "I am Henry of Winchester." It was the poor old King, who had been clothed in armour and placed on horseback among Simon's men.

Now nearly all Simon's men were dead. Only one

little group remained, fighting fiercely. One by one this little band fell, until at last only Simon was left.

“Is any quarter given?” cried the Earl.

“No quarter for traitors!” was the reply.

Raising his heavy sword in both hands, Simon cut his way through the enemy. They fled right and left as he came near, for the old man was still terrible. A lance-thrust killed his horse. He fought on foot.

At last, struck down from behind, he fell. “It is God’s grace,” he murmured as the breath left his body.

Thus died the greatest man of his time—the man to whom we owe much of our present freedom.

✓His life was simple and upright. He always dressed in plain brown. He ate very little, and only of the plainest food, slept little, and worked unceasingly. He always chose good men for his friends, and scorned all lies and deceit.

In manner he was cheerful and pleasant. Perhaps he was a little quick tempered sometimes, but his anger never lasted very long. This is proved by the way in which he treated his unfaithful friend the King. Time after time Henry was unjust to him, but Simon was always ready to help him in his need.

Perhaps the best way to describe his character is to say that he was loved by good and unselfish men and hated by the wicked or deceitful. ✓

In the north aisle of Westminster Abbey you may see his coat of arms. It was placed there when he stood high in the favour of Henry III., and it has been left untouched ever since.

SIR WILLIAM WALLACE.

I.—THE ENGLISH IN SCOTLAND.

I WANT to take you back to a time more than six hundred years ago, when Edward I. was King of England. This King spent nearly all the latter half of his life in trying to conquer Scotland.

It seems very strange to us now to talk about *conquering* Scotland. But at that time Scotland was a separate kingdom, ruled over by its own kings. In the north of it, among the mountains of the Highlands, lived the real *Scots*, a people who had come from Ireland many years before. King Edward did not have very much to do with these people. The Scots against whom he fought lived in the Lowlands, south of the Firth of Forth. They were really not Scots at all, but Englishmen. Most of them were Saxons, whose forefathers had settled in the great Saxon kingdom of Northumbria. And among these Saxons were many Norman families, who owned broad lands and strong castles. These people of the Lowlands,

however, had lived there so long that they had at last come to look upon themselves as belonging to another nation.

Some time after Edward I. came to the throne the King of Scotland died. He left no children to succeed him, and the next heir to the throne was his grandchild Margaret, daughter of the King of Norway. She was only a little girl, and she was not very strong, and, on her way to Scotland, she died too.

So now it was necessary to decide who should be King. There were thirteen persons altogether who thought that the throne was rightly theirs. They all claimed to be related to the Royal Family, and no doubt each one of them thought that his claim was better than that of any of the others. We need not trouble about the names of all these thirteen people; the most important were two powerful nobles named John Baliol and Robert Bruce.

Both of these men had good claims to the throne, and the nobles of Scotland felt that they could not decide between them. So at last they appealed to Edward of England, and asked him to settle the matter for them.

But before Edward took any steps to decide who was to be King, he demanded that the Scots should acknowledge him as their "overlord," and should give up the royal castles.

After some delay this was agreed to, and Edward then decided quite fairly that John Baliol was to be King. So now John Baliol had to bow the knee to Edward, and to admit that he held the kingdom only at Edward's pleasure. It must be owned that Edward

did not treat John Baliol with much respect. He compelled him to travel all the way to London to attend the courts of law and Parliament, and when Baliol got to London he was treated just as though he had been an ordinary man.

Baliol was meek and rather timid. His people jeered at him because he allowed Edward to deal so badly with him. They called him "Toom Tabard" or "Empty Coat," meaning that he was not a man at all, but a mere bundle of clothes.

At last, however, Baliol's spirit was stung to anger. He saw that Edward meant, little by little, to destroy his power, and he determined to defy the King. So, the next time he was sent for to travel to London, he refused to go. He sent the King a letter telling him that he would no longer own him as "overlord."

Terrible was Edward's wrath when he received this message.

"Ha! this fool!" he shouted. "Dare he commit such folly? If he will not come to us, we will go to him."

Then Edward gathered together a great army, and marched against Baliol. The Scottish army was defeated in a battle fought near Dunbar, and Baliol was compelled to come to the King of England and ask for mercy. Without sword or dagger, or arms of any kind, robed in a plain dress, and carrying a white wand in his hand, he knelt at Edward's feet and asked pardon for his folly. He was forgiven, and sent to London, where he was kept prisoner for many years.

With his great army Edward marched through

Scotland, and wherever he went the Scots submitted to him.

When he returned to London, in order to show that he was now master of Scotland, he took with him the Scottish crown and the famous stone upon which all the Kings of Scotland sat when they were crowned. It was said that wherever this stone was Scottish Kings would reign. Edward took it to Westminster Abbey, and it was afterwards placed in the chair upon which English Kings and Queens are crowned. Our King, Edward VII., sat over that stone when he was crowned in 1902.

II.—THE RISE OF WALLACE.

For some time after Edward's victory there was peace—at least in name—between England and Scotland. But the Scots were angry because Edward had made himself master of their country, and they did not like the English rule. The Scottish castles were in the hands of Englishmen now, and these men sometimes treated the Scots unjustly, and even cruelly. The Scots were enraged, too, when they found that they were obliged to pay taxes to the English.

As time went on this discontent grew greater and greater. The Scots grumbled sorely among themselves, and longed to drive all the English out of their country. They only waited for somebody able, strong, and brave enough to lead them, and at last this leader was found in the person of William Wallace.

It is a great pity that we do not know more about the life of this hero. His history was told, two hundred

years after his death, by a Scottish poet named "Blind Harry." No doubt many of the stories which this poet tells were told him by men who had heard them from their fathers, who again had heard them when they themselves were little children. For the Scots have always been justly proud of their hero, Wallace, and we may be sure that stories of his brave deeds would be very carefully remembered.

One of these stories, if it is true, shows how brave and fearless Wallace was even as a young boy.

It is said that he had one day gone to fish for trout in one of the streams near his home. He carried his rod and line, and another boy brought a basket in which to put the fish when they were caught.

Wallace had good sport, and caught a good many fine trout. At the end of the day he gathered up his rod and line and set out for home. On his way he met a party of English soldiers, who stopped him and looked into his basket.

"What fine trout!" said one. "You must give these to us."

"No," answered Wallace sturdily, "I will give you a share of them if you like, but I want some of them for myself, since I have had the trouble of catching them."

The English soldiers were not content with this fair offer. They wanted all the fish, and, seeing that Wallace was only a boy, tried to take the fish from him by force. Wallace would not give them up.

Then the soldiers began to struggle with him. They had swords and daggers, but Wallace had no other weapon than his fishing-rod. He raised this above

his head, and, when the first Englishman came to strike him, dealt him such a blow upon the head that he fell lifeless to the ground. Then, stooping quickly, Wallace took the fallen Englishman's sword and prepared to defend himself.

The other soldiers were a little surprised at the fate of their comrade, but they dashed at Wallace very fiercely all the same. He met their attack with such skill and fury that in the end he put them all to flight, and reached home quite safely with his fish.

The soldiers went away and told their tale to the Governor, who sought to catch Wallace that he might punish him. Wallace, however, heard that the English were on his track, and made good his escape to the mountains. But from that time his hand was against that of every Englishman.

“Blind Harry” tells another story of the early days of William Wallace, before he became the leader of the Scots.

Wallace had grown to be a man, and was married to a lady who lived in the town of Lanark. One day Wallace was walking about the streets of that town, dressed very splendidly in a dress of rich green stuff and bearing a beautifully-hilted dagger at his side.

There were many Englishmen in the streets of Lanark, and they paid great attention to Wallace as he walked among them. His figure was so noble, his bearing was so manly, and he carried his head so high that they could not help noticing him. At last one of them came up to Wallace and spoke to him roughly.

“What do you mean?” said this fellow. “You, a miserable Scotsman! What do you mean by wearing

such a splendid dress or carrying such a handsome dagger ?”

Wallace told the man to mind his own business. The man replied hotly, and so a quarrel began. Words led to blows ; both Wallace and the Englishman drew their weapons and began to fight. In the end Wallace killed the Englishman, and seeing that many others were rushing up, fled away to his house. The crowd followed him, and broke down the front door. But they did not get Wallace, for while his foes were breaking in at the front he had escaped by the back door, and was already fleeing for safety to the hills.

Then the English, it is said, took a terrible revenge upon Wallace. They burned down his house, and put his wife and all his servants to death. We can imagine how great was Wallace's sorrow and anger when he heard this dreadful news. He made up his mind that he would never rest while an Englishman remained in Scotland.

The English Governor had made Wallace an “out-law,” or “wolf's-head.” This meant that he could no longer call upon the law to protect him, and anybody might kill him without fear of punishment. In addition to this, a large reward was offered to anybody who would deliver up his body, alive or dead.

Wallace lived for some time in the hills, and had many adventures. Little by little he gathered a band of comrades around him. The fame of Wallace's name had already spread far and wide over the country, and every day bold Scotsmen came to him, and asked him to lead them against the English. Soon he had quite a strong army.

He led his men in many an attack upon the English. He killed the man who had ordered his wife to be put to death, and by many deeds made his name a name of fear to every Englishman. With each success new followers came to his camp, and among these were some of the great lords of Scotland. He was now no longer a small rebel chief, but the head of a nation in arms.

III.—THE STRUGGLE FOR LIBERTY.

KING EDWARD had appointed a lord named Warenne, Earl of Surrey, to be Governor of Scotland. As soon as he was made Governor, Warenne called upon the Scottish nobles to come and swear to obey his rule. Many of them did so. Indeed, some of the nobles who had joined Wallace left him, and went over to the English ranks. They did this because they were afraid that Wallace would not win the struggle, and that the English King would punish them for helping him by taking away their lands.

Wallace was determined never to submit to the English. Earl Warenne sent to him and bade him lay down his arms, but Wallace refused to do so. He was not a bit disheartened because so many of the Scottish nobles were on the English side ; instead of that he was only the more determined to carry on the fight until the end.

When Warenne found that his brave foe would not submit, he took an army and marched out to take him by force. It was a splendid army. There were thousands of soldiers in armour, and many knights

mounted on strong war-horses. Wallace had a large number of men, too. But his soldiers were not clad in armour, but in ordinary peasants' clothes. They were not very well armed, either, but had to make use of such weapons as they could find. Only a few of their leaders were on horseback. The common soldiers had to fight on foot.

Earl Warenne brought his army to the banks of the River Forth, at a place very near to the town of Stirling, where there was a strong castle. When he came to the river, he found that Wallace had already taken up a position on the other side of it. His men could be plainly seen some distance away, all ready to fight, and watching the English army.

There was only one way of crossing the Forth River, and that was by means of a little wooden bridge that spanned it. This bridge was so narrow that there was only room for two horsemen to ride across it, side by side, at the same time. Earl Warenne wished to make a halt, and to consider what was best to be done. But some of his lords pressed him to go forward.

Before trying to cross the river, however, he sent two messengers to Wallace, offering him a full pardon if he would lay down his arms. But once again Wallace scornfully refused.

"Go back to your leader," he told the messengers, "and tell him that we do not value the pardon of the King of England. We have come here to fight, not to make peace. Let the English come on; we defy them."

Then Earl Warenne set out to cross the River Forth.

Soon after daybreak he sent the first of his horsemen across the little wooden bridge, and they crossed over in safety. Others followed, for hour after hour, and still the Scottish army gave no sign. At twelve o'clock half of the great English army had crossed over, and then suddenly Wallace swooped down upon them.

The bridge was crowded with horsemen. Those who had already crossed were in some disorder, and Wallace's fierce charge made them break away and flee. Many were killed and many drowned in the waters of the river. When they saw what had happened to their comrades, the rest of the English set fire to the wooden bridge, and fled also.

Wallace was now strong enough to attack the English. He led his men against Stirling Castle, drove the English from it, and filled it with his own men. He even marched over the borders into Northumberland and Cumberland, laying waste all the country, and doing a great deal of damage. As the Scots had now neither a King nor a Governor—for you will remember that Baliol was still a prisoner in London, while Earl Warenne had fled—they appointed Wallace to rule over them, giving him the title of Protector of the Scottish Nation.

Edward I. was away in Flanders* when all these events happened. He had thought that Scotland was safely conquered, and he was very angry indeed when he heard that Warenne had been defeated and the strong castle of Stirling taken. He quickly returned to England, and set out to punish the man who had dared to defy him. Wallace knew that the struggle about to take place would be a very severe one, and

* A part of the country now called Belgium.



THE TRIAL OF WALLACE.

(From the painting by Daniel Maclise, R.A. By permission of the Corporation of London.)

he tried to get together a larger army than he had ever had before. Many of the Scottish nobles, however, were jealous now that Wallace had come to power. They remembered that he was not of noble birth, and some of them refused to serve under him. Had all these lords supported him, Wallace might have won freedom for Scotland. Even as it was he made a noble and gallant attempt.

As before, the English army which Edward had brought into Scotland was made up of well-armed, well-mounted knights, clad in armour, and many well-trained foot-soldiers. He had also brought with him some of the famous English bowmen, whose deadly skill with the bow and arrow had won many a battle. Wallace's men were peasants and farmers, badly armed, and untrained in war.

The two armies came together at Falkirk. Wallace had set his men in four hollow circles, causing them to lay the points of their spears one above the other, so as to form a fence of steel.

"I have brought you to the ring," he said to his soldiers. "Now let me see you dance." By this he meant: "I have brought you to the battlefield; now let me see how well you can fight."

And they did fight well. And time after time did Edward's fine cavalry try to break that ring of steel, without success. But at last Edward called up his archers, and these shot such deadly flights of arrows that the ring was broken, and the battle lost.

Wallace fled once again to the hills, and for seven years lived in hourly danger of losing his life. For Edward had set a price upon his head, and was eager

to capture him. To Edward, Wallace was nothing more than a bold robber-rebel who was fighting against his lawful King. At last one of Wallace's own countrymen betrayed him to the enemy, and the brave Scotsman was taken prisoner and brought to London. There he was taken to a court of law, and charged with having been a traitor to King Edward.

"I have never been a traitor to Edward," replied Wallace, "for I was never his subject."

Then they charged him with having killed many Englishmen ; and this time he answered :

"It is true ; but I killed them in fair fight, as my country's enemies. They came to invade Scotland, and I wished to drive them away."

He was found guilty and put to death. His head, crowned in mockery with a wreath of laurel, was cut off and fixed upon London Bridge.

Scotland has produced many a brave man since the time of Wallace, but none of them is more dear to the heart of the Scottish people than this hero, who was one of the first to die for the freedom of his native land.

ROBERT BRUCE.

I.—HOW BRUCE TOOK TO THE HILLS.

FOUR months after the death of William Wallace another leader had arisen in Scotland to take his place, and to carry on the fight for freedom. This leader was Robert Bruce, a grandson of that other Robert Bruce who had claimed the throne of Scotland when John Baliol was made King.

At this time Robert Bruce was a tall, handsome young man of twenty-three years of age. He was very brave and strong. Indeed, it was said that, save William Wallace, the hero who was now dead, there was no man in Scotland to compare with Bruce for strength and courage. Beside this, he was a very skilful general, and he was undoubtedly of royal birth.

Like many other Scottish nobles, Bruce had fought with the English against his own countrymen. But after a time he left the English army, and never again returned to it, for he had begun to think of making himself King of Scotland, and setting his country free.

At Dumfries, a little town on the Borders, a Scottish nobleman named John Comyn was staying. Next to Bruce, Comyn himself had the best claim to the Scottish throne, and he was not very friendly with Bruce. But Bruce went to Dumfries to try to per-

suade Comyn to give up all private quarrel, and to join with him against the English.

The two met in a church in the town. Both of the men were very hasty-tempered, and they soon began to quarrel. From words they passed to blows, and, drawing their daggers, they fought fiercely in front of the altar in the church. At last John Comyn fell to the ground, bleeding from a deep wound.

As soon as Bruce saw what he had done he fled from the church in terror. Outside he met several of his companions, and these, seeing him so pale and with blood upon him, asked what was the matter.

"I doubt that I have slain the Red Comyn," said he.

"Do you leave such a matter in doubt?" cried one of his friends. "I will make sure." And Bruce's men went to the church and killed the wounded man as he lay on the floor.

The news of this terrible deed spread far and wide. To most people the fact that Comyn had been killed in a church, in the very shadow of the altar, seemed even worse than the murder itself. All Comyn's friends and relations swore that they would be revenged upon Bruce, and determined to kill him whenever they should get a chance.

Bruce soon saw that the bold course was the safest one for him. He knew that the English would try to catch him and put him to death for the deed, and he made up his mind to defy them at once. So he called together all the men upon whom he could rely, and caused himself to be crowned King of Scotland.

When the ceremony was finished, Bruce turned to his wife.

“Now,” said he, with a smile, “thou art Queen of Scotland, and I am King.”

But his wife answered him: “I fear that we are only playing at Kings and Queens, like children in their games.”

Both Bruce and his wife, however, were soon to find out that it was no mere game that they were playing, but deadly earnest.

You may imagine how angry King Edward was when he heard that Comyn had been killed, and that Robert Bruce had been crowned King of Scotland. He was at dinner when a messenger brought him the news, and he immediately arose in anger. He was an old man now, and failing in health, but he must have looked very terrible as he stood there, with flashing eyes, before all his nobles, and swore to punish this Scotsman who had dared to defy him.

With a great army he marched north to meet Bruce, and in the very first battle the Scots were badly defeated. Bruce himself was taken prisoner, but, fortunately for him, his captor was a Scotsman, who set him free again. His army was scattered, many of his nobles were taken, and afterwards put to death, and Bruce himself was forced to flee to the mountains.

There now began a time of the greatest hardship. With Robert Bruce were his wife and the Countess of Buchan, who had crowned him King, and by so doing had earned the hatred of the English. His two brothers, Edward and Nigel Bruce, and his greatest friend, Lord James Douglas, also accompanied the King in his wanderings.

From place to place they went, always in fear of their lives. Parties of English soldiers were searching for them all over the country. They dared not venture into the towns, but were obliged to keep among the mountains, taking refuge by night in rocky caves, or in roughly built huts. They did not want for food, for they hunted the deer that roamed about the moorlands, and caught the fish in the mountain lakes and streams. But it was a hard life, and a dangerous one, especially for those brave ladies who shared the exile of the King.

During the whole of the summer Bruce and his little party wandered among the mountains. In spite of all his troubles, the King kept up a good heart and never despaired. His good temper and cheerfulness caused all troubles to seem light. In the long summer days Bruce would read aloud to his companions, or tell them stirring stories that made them forget their own hardships.

But now the dark winter days came on, and the cold winds blew through the mountain passes, and the ground was often white with snow. Everyone of the little band suffered terribly ; but the ladies suffered more than the men. Bruce felt that it would not be right to keep them with him any longer, and so he sent them to take refuge in the only one of his castles which had not been captured. Hardly had they reached the castle, however, than it was taken by the English.

Bruce and his brother Edward had fled to a little island off the coast of Ireland, and there the news of his wife's capture was brought. The King was in

despair. All his followers were scattered, his life was not safe from one hour to another, and there seemed no longer to be any hope of success. Many a night did he sit, with his head in his hands, thinking bitterly of his ill-fortune, and wondering whether it would not be better to give up all attempt to win freedom for Scotland.

It is said that, on one of these occasions, when his despair was greater than ever, he saw a little spider, which was trying to spin its web upon the roof. He watched it idly at first, still thinking of his sorrows. The little insect was trying to fix a line of its web across from one beam in the roof to another. Again and again it tried, and each time it failed. Bruce counted and found that it had made six attempts altogether. Then he remembered that he had fought six battles with the English, and had been beaten in every one of them.

“Why, I am like the spider!” he said to himself. “I will watch and see what the little insect does next. If it tries again and succeeds, I too will try again. But if it does not try again, or if it fails, then I will give up hope, and flee from Scotland for ever.”

The spider, however, had no idea of giving up. For the seventh time it swung its little body across, and this time the web held fast. Then Bruce rose up, and his heart was filled with new hope. As the spider had persevered, so he too would persevere, and perhaps, like the spider, he too would be successful in the end.

II.—HOW BRUCE FOUGHT SINGLE-HANDED AGAINST TWO HUNDRED MEN.

Finding that he could not take Bruce by fair means, the English leader offered a large sum of money to one of the King's friends if he would kill him. The man promised to try, and for a long time waited for a chance. One day this traitor, who had his two sons with him, saw the King walking with only a little page-boy to attend him. The three men were well armed. The father had a sword, one of the sons had a sword and a spear, and the other had a sword and a battle-axe. The little page-boy who was with Bruce carried a bow and arrows, and these the King took from him, for he guessed that the traitors meant to try to take his life.

The King called upon them to stand. They took no notice, but still came on, speaking flattering words. Then Bruce called out in a loud voice: "Traitors! Ye have sold my life for English gold; but you shall die if you come one foot nearer to me!"

The men still came on, however, and, bending his bow, Bruce shot an arrow which pierced the father to the heart. With a cry of rage the two sons dashed upon the King. One smote at him with his battle-axe, but Bruce stepped back quickly. The villain stumbled, and, before he could recover himself, the King's sword laid him low. The third thrust at the King with his spear, and this time Bruce struck off the steel head of the weapon, and killed the man before he could draw his sword.

When the little page saw that his master was safe, and that his enemies were dead, he came running up gladly. But Bruce stood looking sorrowfully at the bodies. "See what harm greed for gold can do!" he said sadly. "These were good men, and very brave, but they were tempted, by the love of gold, into wicked ways."

Not long after this adventure, Bruce's enemies made another attempt to kill him. Most of the King's followers were away, and he was left with only sixty men. His enemies thought that this would be a good opportunity to be revenged upon him for the death of John Comyn. Accordingly, two hundred of them came together and set out to find Bruce, with a bloodhound to show them the way.

Bruce heard that these men were following him. He made his soldiers camp some distance away from a swift, deep stream, across which the enemy would have to pass before they could take him. The soldiers were very tired with long marching, and as soon as they made camp, threw themselves down to sleep. Bruce, however, did not sleep. Taking two of his companions with him, he walked towards the river, and stood there watching the waters. He saw that the stream could only be crossed at one point, and he thought how easy it would be to defend such a position.

Suddenly he heard the loud howling of a dog. It was the call of the bloodhound, which Bruce's enemies had placed upon his track. For a moment the King thought of going back to waken his men, but he did not. "My men are very tired," he thought; "I will not

disturb them merely because I have heard a dog bark. I will wait and see what comes of this matter."

Soon, however, Bruce heard the sound of horses galloping and the clang of armour. As the enemy approached he could see the moonlight shining on their steel helmets and glittering swords. Then Bruce turned to his companions, and bade them go back to camp and alarm the soldiers. He had made up his mind that, single-handed, he would keep those two hundred men from crossing the stream.

On came the shouting crowd. Bruce, whose strong armour protected him from arrows, stood on the high bank and waited. There was only room in the narrow ford for one horseman to pass at a time. The first that came Bruce killed, and stabbed his horse with another blow. The animal fell, plunging and kicking, into the stream, blocking the way. Still the horsemen came on, only to be killed before they could climb the high, steep banks. At last the ford was quite blocked with the bodies of men and horses, and the crowd on the other side of the stream hung back in fear. When they saw that only one man was contending against them, however, they came on more fiercely than before.

But by this time Bruce's two companions had awakened his soldiers, who came rushing up. By the time they reached the stream the enemy had turned and fled; and Robert Bruce, unhurt, but very tired, was sitting on the bank, with his helmet off, wiping his hot brow.

III.—FURTHER ADVENTURES.

The English were not the only enemies Robert Bruce had to fear. Many of the friends of Red Comyn sought for him, and tried to bring about his death. The chief of these friends was a man named John of Lorn.

However hard he tried, this bitter enemy found that he could not capture Robert Bruce. Still, he did not give up hope, for he hated him very much indeed. At last he joined forces with the English Earl of Pembroke, and the two men laid yet another plan to bring Bruce to his death.

John of Lorn had a bloodhound which had formerly belonged to King Robert himself. As you know, a bloodhound is able to track a person by smelling at the ground over which he has passed. John of Lorn thought that this hound would be able to pick out the scent of the King from among those of other men, and that he would by this means be certain of following Bruce to his hiding-place. So the Earl of Pembroke took a large body of soldiers, and came to attack Bruce in one direction, while John of Lorn, with his men, came to attack him in another.

Robert Bruce soon saw that if he remained to fight the English Earl, he would be attacked from behind ; so, although he would have liked to stay and fight, he made up his mind that the best thing to do would be to retreat. He divided his men into three bodies, and told each to go in a different direction, and to meet again, later in the day, at a certain place. He did

this because he thought that his foes would not know in which division the King was, and that they would be led astray.

As soon as he found that Bruce was retreating, John of Lorn made ready to pursue him. He would not have known which way to go, but the bloodhound took no notice of the tracks made by the other two divisions of Bruce's army, but followed those made by the men who were with the King. In a short time Bruce found out that he was followed, so he caused the men that were with him to separate, and to take different ways. Then he went on alone, except for one man, his foster brother, who would not leave him.

Once again John of Lorn's men came up to the place where Bruce's men had scattered, and once again they would have been puzzled. But the bloodhound went straight on, following the tracks of two men, so that John of Lorn knew that at last he had found the King away from his companions. He pressed on with greater haste, and soon was able to catch sight of the figures of Bruce and his faithful foster-brother as they fled through the woods.

Then John of Lorn sent five men on before with orders to take the King or kill him. Bruce heard them coming, and, with his brother at his side, turned to meet them.

At any time Bruce was one of the strongest men and one of the finest fighters in Scotland. How much more terrible he must have been now, when he was fighting for his life! The five men came nearer and nearer, shouting out to Bruce to lay down his arms, for they

thought that they could easily beat him by force of numbers. Bruce said nothing, but sprang at them fiercely. In a few minutes all was over. Some of the five were killed, the others were badly wounded, and Bruce and his brother once more fled through the forest.

Behind them they could still hear the shouts of their enemy and the deep baying of the bloodhound. Both of them were very tired, and their strength was fast failing, so that they felt they could go very little farther. Suddenly, as they burst through the trees, they saw that they had arrived at the banks of a stream which flowed through the forest.

"Let us wade in the water," said Bruce, "for by this means the hound will lose scent of us."

So the two waded out to the middle of the stream and pressed on their way, keeping in the water all the time. Sure enough, when the bloodhound came to the water he stopped. Once or twice he ran up and down trying to find the scent, but it was no use, the hunt was over for that day.

Bruce's adventures were by no means ended yet. Having travelled some distance down the stream, and hearing no noise of pursuit, he left the water and went into the thick dark forest again. There, as he wandered on in search of a place where he might get food and shelter, he met three men. They were well armed, and one of them was carrying a sheep on his back. Bruce did not like the looks of them at all. He was quite certain that they were rascals, and that the sheep they were carrying had been stolen. He did not show his distrust, however, but boldly

marched up to the men and asked them where they were going.

"We are looking for King Robert Bruce," said one of them, "for we wish to join him and to be his soldiers."

Bruce knew that the rascal lied, and guessed that he had recognized the King.

"Very well," said Bruce; "I know where the King is, and I will show you the way to his hiding-place. But, as we do not know one another very well, you must go on first, and we will follow you."

"Why," said the man, "you surely do not think that we mean to do you any harm?"

"No," answered Bruce, "but I prefer to travel in that way. So lead on, if you please."

The man saw that the King was in earnest, and sulkily obeyed. Soon they came to a broken-down cottage in the midst of the wood, and made up their minds to rest there awhile. The whole party entered the hut, and the men whom Bruce had met cut up their sheep and prepared to cook an evening meal. King Robert made them light two fires, one at one end of the hut and a second at the other end, for he did not wish to be too near to his rascally companions, lest they killed him suddenly.

So Bruce and his foster-brother ate their supper by themselves at one end of the hut. And when they looked up from their meat now and again they caught an ugly glance of hate from the eyes of the villains opposite.

When supper was ended, Bruce, who was so tired that he could hardly keep his eyes open, stretched

himself out before the fire to sleep. His foster-brother said that he would watch while the King slept, and he did his very best to keep awake. But the warm fire, the good meal he had just eaten, and his great weariness, overcame him, so that in spite of himself he too fell into a heavy slumber.

Then those villains arose and drew their swords, and came to kill the King and his companion. Fortunately, however, Bruce was a very light sleeper. For months he had been a hunted man, and he was easily awakened by the faintest noise. When he heard the sound the men made in rising he sprang to his feet, drew his sword, kicked his brother to awaken him, and prepared to defend himself.

The ruffians came on in silence. Before the King's brother could rise or get the sleep out of his eyes one of them killed him by a blow on the head. But now Bruce's sword was rising and falling—that terrible sword that no one wielded so well as he. The villains had met their match. One after another they went down, until at last the King was left alone in the hut.

After he had said a prayer over the body of his faithful foster-brother, Bruce set out once again towards the place where he had told his men to meet him. He was not at all sure of the way, so, coming to a farmhouse, he went into it. An old woman was sitting in the kitchen, and, seeing a stranger enter, she asked him who he was and what he wanted.

"I am a traveller," said Bruce, "who has lost his way."

"Then welcome!" said the good old woman. "I am pleased to see all travellers for the sake of one."

“And who is that one?” asked Bruce, smiling.

“It is our rightful King, Robert Bruce,” answered the woman, “who is now being hunted like a wild beast with horse and hound, but whom I hope yet to see King of all Scotland.”

Then Bruce told the old woman who he was. She was greatly surprised, and finding that he was all alone she sent for her two sons, and told them to go with the King to watch over him and protect him. Just as they were ready to set out, however, they heard the sound of voices, the clash of arms, and the trampling of steeds outside the farmhouse. Bruce rushed to the door to see whether his enemies had come upon him, and found that it was the Lord James Douglas, with his band of true Scotsmen.

How glad they were to find that the King was safe and sound! When they had welcomed him, and he had told them of all his adventures, Douglas said that he meant to attack the English.

“They think that we have fled,” said he. “As I rode along I passed two hundred of them who were resting in a little village near by. They will never be expecting an attack. Let us take them by surprise and win a victory.”

Bruce immediately jumped upon a horse and put himself at the head of the band. He led his men against the English, took them by surprise, and drove them away in all directions.

IV.—THE BATTLE OF BANNOCKBURN.

At the time when Bruce was crowned King of Scotland, Edward I. was an old man and very feeble. As you know, he had sworn to punish Bruce for daring to defy him ; and to carry out his threat he marched north to Scotland with a great army. But his health was failing. It took him a day to ride five miles, and before he could reach Scotland he died.

With his last breath he charged his son to carry on the war, and asked that his body might remain unburied until Robert Bruce was punished. Both commands were disobeyed. Edward II. did not carry on the war, and his father's body was taken to Westminster Abbey. On the plain marble tomb was written these words :

“ Here lies Edward I., The Hammer of the Scots.”

The new King was just the very opposite of his father. Instead of being hard-working, he was pleasure-loving. Instead of thinking of the welfare of his people, as his father had done, he thought of nothing but how to enjoy himself.

In Scotland Robert Bruce was getting stronger and stronger. One by one the Scottish castles fell into his hands, until only one of them, that of Stirling, remained to the English. Even this castle of Stirling was surrounded by Bruce's soldiers, and the English within its walls were in great distress. The governor of the castle was Sir Philip Mowbray, and Lord James Douglas was in command of the Scottish army that were encamped round it. Many times did Douglas

call upon Sir Philip to give up the castle to him, but each time the brave Englishman refused.

At last, finding that his food was giving out, he told Douglas that if no help arrived from the King of England by Midsummer Day, he would deliver the castle to the Scots. Then he sent a message to Edward II. telling him what he had done, and praying the King to send him aid. At this appeal even Edward was stirred, and he gathered together an army and marched to Scotland.

Bruce knew that the fight which was now to take place would be the end of the struggle. He sent out to all his Barons, and asked them to bring soldiers to help him. He knew that the English army was more than three times as large as his own. He knew, too, that the English would bring many splendidly armed knights and well-trained bowmen. So he tried to make up for his weakness by choosing a place where he could fight to the best advantage.

He set out his army in a plain near Stirling. On one side of his line flowed a little river called Bannock Burn. Before him stretched a wide plain. One side of this plain was very marshy, so that horse soldiers could not cross it. The other part of the plain was firm ground, but to prevent the English from riding across this Bruce caused many pits to be dug. Each pit was about three feet deep. At the top it was covered over with hurdles and turf, so that it would bear the weight of a man, but not of a horse. When all was finished the pits were so well hidden that no one would have thought that they were there.

Soon the two armies came face to face. Bruce,

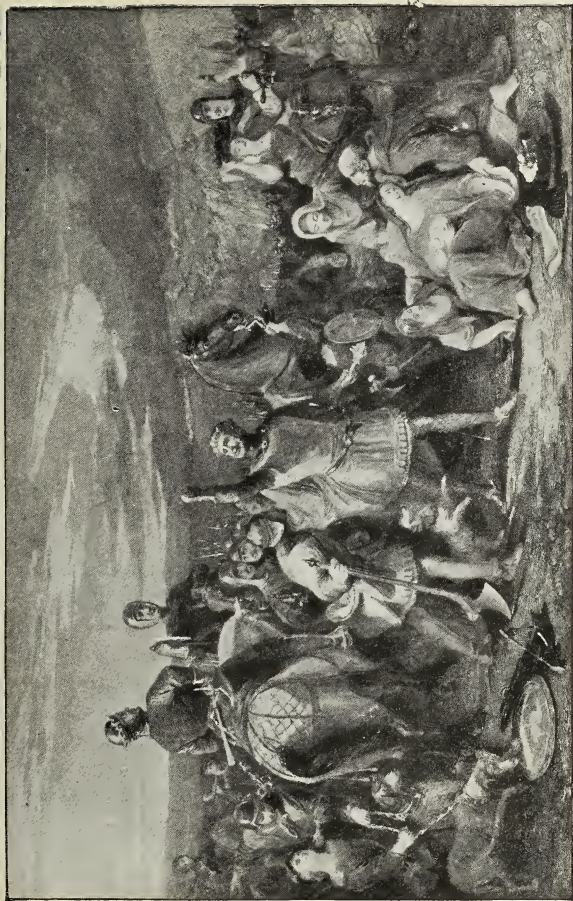
mounted on a white palfrey, rode down the line of his soldiers, cheering them on. He was clad in armour ; in his hand he bore a battle-axe of shining steel, and on his head, over his helmet, he wore a gold crown. An English knight named De Boune, seeing the King riding thus, thought that it would be a good chance to kill him. So, setting his spear in rest, he clapped spurs to his horse and charged down upon Bruce.

The King saw him coming, and let him get very near. But, just as it seemed that the spear was bound to pierce his heart, he caused his palfrey to leap aside. Then, as the knight thundered past, Bruce rose in his stirrups and dealt him such a mighty blow with his battle-axe that the knight was hurled from the saddle and the brass handle of the axe was shattered in the King's hand. When Bruce rode back to his men they were very angry with him for risking his life when so much depended upon his leadership. But all Bruce said in reply was, "I have broken my good battle-axe."

The next day, early in the morning, the battle began. The arrows from the English bowmen fell thick as rain, and killed many of the Scots, until Bruce sent a body of light horsemen among the archers and scattered them. Then the knights set spurs to their horses and charged down upon the Scots.

But, alas ! their horses fell into the pits which Bruce had dug, and hurled their riders to the ground. As more and more came on, the ground was covered with a confused mass of men and horses, who were quite at the mercy of Bruce's soldiers.

Just then an event happened which decided the



HEROISM AND HUMANITY: AN INCIDENT IN THE LIFE OF BRUCE.

(After the painting by Sir Wm. Allen. Rischgitz, Photo.)

victory. Before the battle Bruce had sent all the servants and the drivers of the baggage-waggons to a hill behind the Scottish lines. This hill was afterwards called "the Gillies' [or servants'] Hill." When they saw the English charge, these servants thought that their masters were in need of help; so they charged down, with pieces of tent-cloth tied to poles as banners, and shouting and yelling at the top of their voices. The English, seeing them come, thought that they were a new body of soldiers come to help Bruce, and, struck with fear, they turned and fled.

Foremost in the flight was King Edward himself. One of his knights held the bridle of his horse and went with him until the King was out of danger. Then he would not go any farther. "It is not my custom to flee," he said; and, turning, he rode back into the thickest of the fight, and fell, fighting bravely.

Edward fled to Stirling Castle, and asked to be taken in, but the Governor told him that the Castle would soon be delivered to the Scots. Then he fled in another direction, and after many dangers succeeded in escaping to England. Half his great army had been killed or had been taken prisoners. It was the most terrible defeat that the English had ever suffered.

Robert Bruce was now King of Scotland indeed, and once more his native country was free. By his bravery, his perseverance, and his skill, the man who had been hunted by dogs, who had been starved and frozen with cold, who had wandered in despair over the hills of his native land, had come to his own again.

We shall tell one more story of Robert Bruce; and if all the other stories we have told of him be forgotten,

it is well that this one, at least, should be remembered, for it is the story of a "Golden Deed."

After the Battle of Bannockburn Bruce fought in Ireland, helping his brother Edward, who wished to be King of that country. One day Bruce's army was pursued by a very much larger body of Irish. Bruce would not stay to fight, because if he did he was almost certain to be beaten. So he gave the order to retreat.

Just as he was about to mount his horse he heard a cry, and asked what was the matter. It was a poor woman, who had a young baby at her breast. She prayed the King not to leave her, for she was afraid of falling into the hands of the Irish, who would have killed her and her little child.

Bruce did not know what to do. He could not take the woman with him, for he had no cart in which she might be carried. At last he looked round to his officers.

"Gentlemen," said he, "shall it be said that we left this poor woman to die? Let us remember our own mothers, and stay here and fight, and meet death ourselves rather than leave her."

So the army stayed to fight—and all on account of a poor woman. But when the Irish saw that Bruce did not fly, they thought he must have a good reason. He was such a splendid general that they thought this was part of a new plan to defeat them. And so they turned, and left him alone.

Bruce reigned for fifteen years after he had beaten the English, and at last he died of a disease caught during that dreadful time when he was hunted from place to place over the hills of Scotland.

GEOFFREY CHAUCER.

I.—THE LIFE OF CHAUCER.

MANY years ago, when Richard II. was King of England, there was an old inn at Southwark known as the Tabard. In our time Southwark is a very busy part of London, but in those days it was very little more than a small country village, outside the walls of London, and through it passed the highroad leading to Sussex, Surrey, and Kent. The Tabard Inn was so called because of the picture on its signboard.

Most inns were named after some familiar object or some well-known person, and then the picture of that object, or the portrait of that person, was painted on a wooden board and hung outside the inn. This was done because, in those days, very few people were able to read. The picture on the signboard of the Tabard was, of course, a picture of a tabard, and that is a special kind of coat which was worn by the rich men in those days. The Tabard Inn has long ago been pulled down, but we still remember where it stood, because of a great poet named Geoffrey Chaucer, who wrote about it in his tales.

Geoffrey Chaucer lived in the reigns of Edward III. and Richard II. He was the son of John Chaucer, a well-to-do wine-merchant or vintner who lived in

Thames Street, near where Cannon Street Station stands to-day. Young Geoffrey spent most of the early years of his life in London, and, as he was a thoughtful boy, and one who always kept his eyes open and noticed what was going on around him, he found plenty to amuse himself. He always loved London very much. He liked to walk in the streets and take notice of the men and women who passed by. And when there was a procession in the long street of Cheap—now called Cheapside—as there very often was, we may be sure that Geoffrey was there to see it.

Geoffrey Chaucer lived a very busy and adventurous life. When he was about sixteen years old, he became a page in the household of Lionel, Duke of Clarence, who was the brother of the Black Prince. His duties in this position would not be very heavy. He would have to wait upon his mistress, and go with her wherever she went; and as the nobles of that time often travelled from one place to another, Geoffrey always had something fresh to see and to think about. In after years he made good use of the knowledge of men and women which he was thus able to attain.

At the age of nineteen Chaucer became a soldier, and went to fight in the French wars. He was not fortunate, for he was taken prisoner by the enemy; but after he was released he returned to England and entered the King's service. It was about this time that he began to write poetry. At first he did not write tales, but tender little songs, which he perhaps sang himself to the lords and ladies at Edward's Court. They were all surprised at his

genius, and encouraged him to persevere, and were always very anxious to read any new poem which he had written.

But although Chaucer was a poet, he did not spend all his life in dreaming ; he was far too busy for that. He was sent to Italy on the King's business, and travelled several times in that country. Wherever he went he carried with him the same eager, alert mind. In Italy he listened to the poems and stories written by great Italian writers. He kept these in his memory, and afterwards rewrote them in English for his own countrymen to read. But when he told the stories again, he put in so many beautiful touches of his own that it was almost as good as though he had told them himself in the first place.

Chaucer was afterwards made a Controller of the King's Customs. This was a very important office, and one that entailed much hard work. As a Custom-House Officer, Chaucer had to deal with the goods that came into the country. It is true, he had clerks to help him, but he did not leave them to do all the work. He took his share, and wrote all the entries in the books in his own hand.

Later on in his life Chaucer became a Member of Parliament. He died in 1400, and was buried in Westminster Abbey. You may still see his tomb there, with this inscription upon it :

“ Of English bards who sung the sweetest strains,
Old Geoffrey Chaucer now this tomb contains ;
For his death's date, if, reader, thou should'st call,
Look but beneath, and it will tell thee all.

“ 25th October, 1400.”

And now let us see what Geoffrey Chaucer looked like. We can do this because we have two portraits, of him. One is painted in colours upon a canvas, and the other we are able to paint for ourselves when we read his book, the "Canterbury Tales."

The picture shows us a handsome man between forty and fifty years of age, dressed in a very dark violet-coloured gown. From his belt there hangs a knife and a case of pens. His face is very earnest and thoughtful, but we feel as we look at it that it must often have been lighted up with good-humour and merry laughter. The eyes are full and very bright. They are thoughtful, too, but there is just a trace of mischief in their glance. The white forehead is broad and high; the skin as fair and delicate as a woman's, and the full, rounded chin is covered with a fair beard, which is cut into a forked shape. Such is the man as he looks out at us from the painted canvas. "One feels that one would like to go to such a man when one was in trouble, and hear his wise and tender speech."

His works tell us not only what he looked like, but also something of his habits and character. One of his friends once said to him :

"Thou look'st as thou would'st find a hare,
For ever on the ground I see thee stare!"

But we know that, even if he did seem to keep his eyes on the ground when he was in the company of others, he was watching them very carefully all the time. He noticed not only their appearance, but their habits as well. He listened to their manner of speaking, and watched their actions; and afterwards

he described them in his book. So well did he draw their portraits that men still read the "Canterbury Tales" to find out how people lived and dressed and spoke in England five hundred years ago.

You will know now what we mean when we say that Chaucer's works show us that he was a keen observer. When you are older you will perhaps read some of Chaucer's tales for yourself, and then you will learn much more of the character of this great man. You will find that he hated deceitfulness and lies, and that he held in the greatest contempt those men who pretended to be good, and yet lived evil lives. You will find, too, that although he very often says funny things about people, and makes his readers laugh at their strange ways, yet he is always good-natured and kindly. For he loved his fellow-men, and that is the reason why he was able to write about them so well.

Chaucer's tales are written in English, but if you were to try to read one of them you would find that you could hardly understand a word of it. Many of the words he uses are spelt so strangely that you might not recognize them when you saw them. Other words are from the French language, and you will understand the reason for that if you remember your history lessons.

When William the Conqueror made himself King of England, he brought many Normans with him from France. From that time French was the language spoken by nearly all the rich people, by the King, and by all his nobles. The common people still continued to speak Saxon, but gradually they learnt many French words. And in the same way as

the Normans and the Saxons became joined together into one people—the English—so the Norman tongue and the Saxon tongue became joined together into a language spoken by both Norman and Saxon. Since Chaucer's time the English language has changed very much. Many of the words used then are not used now, and our manner of spelling is very different indeed.

Here is a passage from one of Chaucer's tales. See if you can make out what it means. It describes the cock, Chanticleer, which you will read about in the story on page 50 :

“A yeerde she hadde, enclosed al aboute
With stikkes and a drye ditch withoute
In which she hadde a cok, heet Chaunticleer.
In al the land of crowyng nas his peer.
His voys was murier than the murie orgon
On messe dayes that in the churche gon ;
His coomb was redder than the fyn coral,
And batailled as it were a castel wall ;
His byle was blak, and as the jeet it shoon ;
Lyk asure were his legges and his toon.
His nayles whiter than the lylie flour,
And lyk the burned gold was his colour.”

Now let us learn something about the most important of Chaucer's works, the “Canterbury Tales.”

II.—THE CANTERBURY PILGRIMS.

Canterbury is a town in Kent where there is a very large and beautiful Cathedral. In this cathedral lie the bones of Thomas Becket, who was murdered by the soldiers of Henry II. Ever since the death of

Becket, people had travelled from all parts of the country to pray before the splendid tomb that covered his body. You will remember that Henry II. himself when he heard of the awful deed that had been done because of his hasty words, went to Canterbury and knelt down before Becket's tomb, and commanded the monks to beat him on his bare back with whips. He did that to show how sorry he was that Becket was killed, for although he had been angry with his friend, he had never meant him to be murdered.

It was said that many miracles were worked at Becket's tomb. Tales were told of lame men who had been carried to the cathedral and had walked out again, quite well and strong. Very often, when a person was sick and the doctors could not cure him, he went to Canterbury, and kneeling before the tomb of the saint, prayed to God to make him well again.

But it was not only the sick who went to Canterbury. Many other people went just to see the tomb, and the holy relics that the priest kept there. Kings, nobles, and even poor workers and servants travelled along the road that led from London to Canterbury. The rich people were able to pay for lodging and food as they went on their way, but the poor man very often had to rely upon the help given to him by the rich.

The journey from London to Canterbury took about four days. Of course, there were no trains or even coaches. Those who could not afford to ride on horseback had to travel all the sixty miles on foot.

It must have been a very interesting sight to see a party of pilgrims on their way to Canterbury. The bells on the harness of the horses jingled merrily.



THE CANTERBURY PILGRIMS OUTSIDE THE TABARD INN AT SOUTHWARK. IN THE RIGHT-HAND CORNER CHAUCER IS SHOWN BUSILY TAKING NOTES FOR HIS "CANTERBURY TALES."

(After the picture by E. Carbould. Rischgitz, Photo.)

Some of the pilgrims sang songs as they marched along, and some made loud music with bagpipes. When they passed through a village, all the children came out to stare, and the dogs ran barking after them because they made such a noise. The pilgrims themselves looked upon their journey as quite a holiday, and enjoyed themselves as much as ever they could.

It is of a party of pilgrims such as this that Chaucer writes in the "Canterbury Tales." There were twenty-nine of them altogether, and they had met at the Tabard Inn at Southwark before they started off to Canterbury. Chaucer was there, and watched them as they came into the inn. Let us suppose that we are there too, standing by his side, and looking at the men and women as they troop into the big courtyard.

First there comes a Knight, riding on a good horse. He is dressed in armour, and over his coat of mail is a short vest, soiled and dirty, for he is not long returned from the wars. He has been at fifteen battles, and has fought bravely in many countries.

By his side rides his son, the young Squire. He is a handsome lad of about twenty years of age, with curly hair falling over his shoulders. How well he sits his horse, and with what a bright smile does he look round upon the company !

Behind the Knight and the Squire follows their servant, the Yeoman. He is a strong-looking fellow, carrying a mighty bow in his hand. Under his belt he bears a sheaf of arrows tipped with peacock feathers, and at his side hangs a long sword. He is dressed in a green coat and hood, and over his shoulder is slung

a hunting-horn, for he is a forester, and spends much of his time in the woods.

Next come Madame Eglantine, the Prioress. She is the mistress of an abbey and a lady of high birth. She is very well mannered, and when she eats, she never lets a morsel of food drop from her lips, nor dips her finger *very* deeply into the sauce. She is not at all proud, but is a very good and kind lady.

“She would weep if that she saw a mouse
Caught in a trap, if it were dead, or bled.”

And she has some little dogs that she feeds herself with pieces of meat or with bread and milk.

After the Prioress come a Nun and three Priests, and then a Monk, with a jolly round, red face, and a bald head that shines like glass. A Friar follows him, and then a Merchant, with a forked beard, just like Chaucer's own, and a beaver hat on his head.

But what is that strange noise we can hear? It sounds as if someone were playing upon the bagpipes. The music comes nearer and nearer, until at last the musician himself comes in through the gate. We laugh a little when we look at him, for he is a funny fellow enough. He is blowing into the bagpipes with all his might and main, and puffing out his cheeks as though he would burst them. He is a jolly Miller, and he looks just as strong as a miller ought to look. His head is covered with a shock of red hair, and his spade-shaped beard is red too.

We must not spend too much time looking at him, or we shall miss seeing the other pilgrims as they come in at the gate. See! here comes a student from

Oxford, pale and lean with too much study. And after him, very dignified and stately, rides a lawyer. He is a very busy man, but he always manages to appear a little busier than he really is.

Here comes a jolly looking farmer, with a red face and a beard as white as a daisy. You can see, from his plump figure, that he does not starve himself. And indeed, he is so well-to-do that his table is never without food. It *snows* meat and drink in his house!

Still the pilgrims are coming in at the gate. Here are a group of workmen—a Haberdasher, a Carpenter, and a Dyer—with silver-handled knives at their belts, and well-filled purses. They have brought a Cook with them to boil and bake their food. The man that follows next does not seem to be very much at home on horseback. As he comes nearer, we can see why that is—he is a sailor, and he feels more at home on the deck of a ship than the back of a horse.

Many more pilgrims come through the gate of the inn, and presently they all sit down to supper in the big hall. Their host, Harry Bailey, the landlord, sits at the head of the table, and carves the big joint of beef that is brought in, and serves his guests with fish, or flesh, or fowl, whichever they prefer.

After supper is cleared away, and the pilgrims have paid their bills, Harry Bailey tells them of a plan he has thought of to make their journey more pleasant. His honest, cheery face is all ashine with good-nature as he speaks.

"Listen, my friends," says he, "I am very glad to welcome you all to my inn. It is a long time since I saw such a merry company, and that's the truth! You are all going to Canterbury, are you not?"

He looks round the table and sees that all are wondering what he is going to say.

"Well," he continues, "I have thought of a splendid plan to make your journey pleasant. What is the use of riding along the roads in silence, keeping yourselves as dumb as stones? There's no enjoyment in that, is there? Of course not. Now, I have a good idea, and if you do as I tell you to-morrow, when you set out on your way, there will be no merrier set of pilgrims in the land. All those who wish to hear what this splendid idea is hold up their hands."

The pilgrims are very eager indeed to learn more of their host's plan, and all of them hold up their hands at once.

"Then," says Harry Bailey, "this is my idea in a few words. Let each of you tell a tale on the way to Canterbury, and another one on the way back. I will go with you myself to make you merrier. And he that tells the best tale shall have a supper free of charge when we return to the Tabard again."

The travellers were very glad indeed to agree to their host's proposal. The next morning they set out on their way, each of them telling a tale, as had been agreed upon. As there were twenty-nine pilgrims beside Chaucer himself, there should have been at least fifty-eight stories. But Chaucer only wrote twenty-four of them, and some of these are not finished.

So we do not know who won the prize, and got that supper for nothing at the Tabard.

In the next chapter you will read a story told by one of the pilgrims as they rode to Canterbury.

III.—A STORY FROM CHAUCER: CHANTICLEER AND THE FOX.

There was once a poor old widow who dwelt in a little cottage. She had three pigs, three cows, a sheep, and two daughters. She was very poor indeed, and had to lead a very simple life. Milk, brown bread, sometimes a piece of bacon or an egg or two, were all the food she ever had. Hunger was the sauce which helped her to enjoy her meals, and she never made herself ill by eating too much.

Outside the widow's cottage there was a yard, fenced in with sticks, and outside the yard a dry ditch. In this ditch lived a cock whose name was Chanticleer.

What a splendid fellow he was! There was no cock in all the land that could beat him at crowing. His voice was as musical as the tones of the church-organ, and he was more to be relied upon than any clock, for he knew by instinct the time when the sun rose every morning, and then he would crow so well that nothing could have been finer to listen to.

On the top of his head this cock had a comb which was redder than the finest coral, and shaped in battlements, just like a castle wall. He had a fine black beak that shone like jet. His legs and feet were blue,

and his claws whiter than the lily flower. And the feathers of his body shone in the sun like burnished gold.

Wherever this splendid fellow went, seven hens followed him. Those were his wives. They were very beautiful, too, but not so beautiful as he. The fairest of them was called Pertelot, and she was so sweet and good-tempered and gay that Chanticleer loved her better than all the others. As for her, the greatest joy of her life was to hear Chanticleer sing, early in the morning, when the bright sun rose, and brought the new day.

Now it happened that one night, as Pertelot and Chanticleer were sitting on their perch in the fowl-house side by side, Pertelot heard her husband make a funny noise in his throat, as if he were choking.

"Oh, dear heart!" she cried in alarm; "what can be the matter with you? Why do you groan in that manner?"

Then Chanticleer told her that he had dreamed a dream. And a very terrible dream it was.

"I thought," said he, "that as I walked up and down in the yard, I suddenly saw a fierce beast. He was something like a dog. His colour was between yellow and red, and the end of his tail and the tips of both his ears were black, quite unlike the rest of his hairs. He had a small snout and two fiery eyes. Oh, how he glared at me! I feel almost ready to die of fright even now when I remember it." And then poor Chanticleer groaned again.

But his wife laughed at him for taking any notice of a dream.

"You must certainly be ill, my dear," she said.

“When one dreams nasty things like that, it is because one has eaten too much supper. You must take some medicine. In the morning I will show you some herbs that grow in our yard. Pick some of these and eat them, and I am quite sure that you will have no more such horrible dreams.”

Chanticleer, however, refused to be comforted. “Dreams sometimes come true,” said he. “I once heard a story which proves that. Listen, and I will tell it to you.

“There were once two men who went on a journey to a distant town. When they arrived there, they found the place so crowded that they could not get lodging. At last one of them was able to find a bed, while the other was forced to be contented with some straw in a stable. There he lay down to rest by the side of the oxen, who all day had been drawing the plough.

“In the middle of the night the man who had been lucky enough to get a bed dreamed a dream. He thought that his friend came to him with a face of fear, and trembling.

“‘Help, my dear brother!’ he implored. ‘Come and help me, or this night I shall be killed as I lie in the stable!’

“So real was the dream that the man awoke, and wondered whether he should go to see whether his friend were safe. But at last, thinking that he was foolish to be alarmed at a dream, he turned over and went to sleep again.

“Twice did he dream the same dream, and the third time he thought that his friend came to him with blood upon him.

“ ‘I am now slain,’ he said. ‘See, I will show you my wounds, how deep and wide they are. Arise early in the morning, and at the west gate of the town you shall see a cart full of hay. In this cart my body is hidden. You must boldly go up to the driver and arrest him, for he is my murderer, who has killed me for the sake of my gold.’

“The dreamer awoke, and rose immediately, and went to the stable to look for his friend. Arriving there, he asked the ostler where his friend was, and was told that he had left the stable early in the morning, as soon as it was day, and had gone out of the town. Then the man became really frightened, and went to the west gate of the town, even as his friend had bidden him in the dream.

“Sure enough, there was the cart full of hay, driven by as ugly a rascal as ever you saw. The man went boldly up, stripped off the hay, and found the body of his poor friend hidden underneath. Then the ostler and the driver of the cart were taken away, and hanged for the villains that they were.

“So you see, my dear,” said Chanticleer, at the end of his sorrowful tale, “that I have cause to be afraid, lest my dream too should come true. I could tell you many more stories showing how warnings of misfortune were given in dreams ; but let us now talk of happier things, for when I look into your beautiful face, and feel your soft warm feathers against me, I feel that I have no longer any fear.”

So saying, Chanticleer flew down from his perch and began to sing his morning song, for it was day. All the hens flew down as well, and followed their

handsome husband round the yard. Up and down he went, stepping proudly on his toes, and whenever he found a grain of corn, he clucked loudly to call his wives, and left them to share it among themselves, like the good-natured fowl that he was. And after a day or two had passed away he quite forgot all about his dream.

In the wood near the widow's cottage there lived a sly fox. Many a time had he seen Chanticleer and the hens walking about in the yard, and his mouth had watered for them. One day this fox broke through the fence, entered the widow's yard, and lay down in one of the vegetable beds to wait for a chance to spring upon Chanticleer.

Without a thought of danger Chanticleer came along with Pertelot, and all his hens after him. He felt very happy that day, and crowed with a very glad voice.

"Listen, my dear," he said to Pertelot, "how joyfully the birds sing! And the fresh flowers are holding up their heads in the sunshine. What a lovely day it is!" And then he looked at a butterfly that was hovering over the cabbages, and saw the cruel eyes of the fox as he lay among the vegetables.

"Cok-cok-cok!" cried Chanticleer in alarm, and the hens flew helter-skelter across the yard for safety. Chanticleer was going to run away too, but just then the fox began to speak.

"Alas, gentle sir," said the sly fox, "why are you so afraid of me? Do you not know that I am your friend? I have not come into this yard to do you any hurt, but only because I so longed to hear you sing. For, truly, you have a voice as sweet as that

of an angel from heaven. Many a time has your father been to my house to sing to me. And, save you, I never in my life heard anybody sing so sweetly as your father. He used to stand on tiptoe, and stretch out his neck, and shut both his eyes, and utter such a flood of melody that my heart was filled with joy. Will you not sing just one little song for me before you go away ?”

Chanticleer was very pleased with this flattery. He thought there could be no harm in singing Mr. Fox just one song, so he stood on tiptoe and stretched out his neck, and shut both his eyes——

And then the sly fox caught him by the throat, and threw him over his back, and rushed out of the yard.

As soon as she saw her poor husband being carried away in this manner Pertelot set up such a loud clucking that all the other hens began to cluck too. Out of the house rushed the widow to see what all the noise was about, and, seeing the fox, she began to call out at the top of her voice, running after Reynard as fast as ever she could go. Her two daughters followed her, and some men who had been working in the fields followed *them*. Col, the dog, rushed out of the house barking fiercely. The cow and the calf ran out of the stables. Even the three pigs, frightened by the barking and the shouting, ran too, and added to the uproar by squealing and squeaking. The geese flew quacking over the trees. The honey-bees came buzzing out of the hive. And what with the clucking of the hens, the barking of the dogs, the shouting of the men, the squealing of the pigs, and the buzzing of the bees, the

uproar was greater than that made by Jack Straw and all his men when they marched upon London.

All this time poor Chanticleer had been lying across the back of the fox. He was very much afraid, but his wits had not quite left him, and, hearing the noise behind, he spoke to the fox.

“If I were you,” he said, “I would not run away from these people. I would turn round to them and say : ‘ Now that I have come to the wood I shall stop and eat the cock at once.’ ”

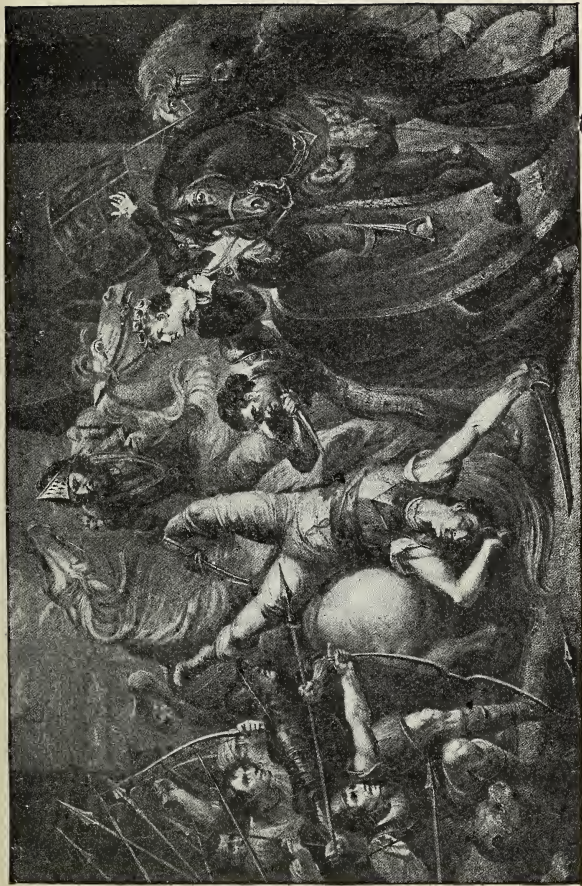
“In faith,” answered the fox, “it shall be done.” And, as he opened his mouth to speak, Chanticleer gave a great pull and a twist, and got himself free, and flew up to the bough of a tree.

“Alas, Master Chanticleer,” said the fox, when he saw that his prey had escaped him, “I have done you much wrong to frighten you so. But I did not wish to do you any harm. Come down now, and I will tell you what I meant by bringing you out of the yard.”

“No, thank you,” answered Chanticleer. “You deceived me once by flattery, and I shall be careful to see that you do not do it again. I have learnt a lesson I am not likely to forget !”

“And I, too,” said the fox to himself as he went sadly away. “I have learnt a lesson. It serves me right for speaking when I should have held my tongue.”

From the “Nonnes Preestes Tale,” by Geoffrey Chaucer.



DEATH OF WAT TYLER.
(After the painting by James Northcote, R.A.)

A. S.

WAT TYLER.

I.—THE DISCONTENT OF THE PEASANTS

IN the reign of Edward III. a terrible plague, known as the "Black Death," visited England. It came in the first place from Asia, and before it attacked the English people it had caused much suffering in some of the other countries of Europe.

At that time men had not learned that dirt is often the cause of disease. They did not know, as we do now, that a great many diseases may be prevented by keeping the houses and streets of a city clean and well drained. The streets in all the towns were very narrow, and the houses crowded together. They were sometimes very filthy also, for careless people often threw their household rubbish out at the front door and left it to rot in the sun. It was not until many fearful plagues had swept over England that men began to take pains to drain their houses and to make wide streets, so as to let in plenty of fresh air and sunlight.

This Black Death was the most terrible plague that had ever been known. For two years it raged all over England. Quite half of the people were killed by it. It attacked the rich and the poor alike, and slew the

great lord in his castle, and the bishop in his church, as well as the poor peasant in his miserable hut.

Of course the greatest number of deaths took place in the big towns, where the houses were crowded together and there was a lack of light and air and cleanliness. At Bristol it is said that there were hardly enough people left alive to bury the dead, and in such large cities as London the suffering was very great indeed. But even the country villages did not escape. The poor peasants and labourers died by thousands, so that "the sheep and cattle strayed through the fields and corn, and there were none left who could drive them."

One of the first results of the Black Death was a rise in the price of labour. Most of the peasants had been killed by the plague, and there were not enough left to do the work that was required on the farms. The crops were left to rot in the fields for the want of men to gather in the harvest. Soon food became very dear, and those who had been spared by the plague were likely to die of hunger.

The farmers and landowners sought everywhere for men to come and work on their farms and lands. But when the peasants saw that their work was so badly needed, they refused to work unless they were paid higher wages than they had ever received before.

In those times, the peasants were bound to the soil on which they were born. They were not allowed to go where they liked in search of work, but were obliged to work for the master on whose lands they lived. All of them were not paid for their labour in money. Some of them paid "labour rent." That is to say,

their masters gave them a piece of land on which they might grow corn and vegetables for their food, and in return they laboured on his lands—harvesting his corn, shearing his sheep, and cutting wood for his fires.

The masters were not pleased when they found that the peasants wished for higher wages. So they passed a law that labourers should not be allowed to receive more money than they had been paid before the Black Death came. This law was called “The Statute (or Law) of Labourers.” It also said that no peasant must leave the place where he lived and go in search of better-paid work. If any man did so, and he were caught, he was burnt on the forehead with a red-hot iron.

Of course, this made the peasants very discontented. Even this, however, was not the worst of their troubles. Before the Black Death many of them had been granted liberties. Their masters were often away fighting in France, and wanted money to buy horses and arms, and to pay their soldiers. The peasants gave them money, and in return the masters told them that they need not work on their lands any longer. So the peasants were left free to spend all their time on their own little farms.

Now the lords wished to take back these liberties. They were very much cleverer than the poor, uneducated peasants, and they paid lawyers to help them do this. It was not a bit of use for the labourers to appeal to the law, because if they did they found that the case was tried by one of the landowners, and of course he always decided that the peasants were wrong. So for many years the poor people grumbled

and were discontented, and began to hate all men who were better off than they were themselves, and lawyers most of all.

In the beginning of the reign of Richard II. there was a priest in Kent whose name was John Ball. He went up and down the country preaching to the people. On Sundays, when men and women were coming out of church, he would wait for them, and gather them round him and talk to them in this way :

“ Ah, good people,” he would say, “ things will never be better in England until peasants and gentlemen are all treated alike.

“ ‘ When Adam delved and Eve span,
Who was then the gentleman ? ’

Our masters are dressed in velvets and warm furs, and we are clothed in rags. They have wines and rich meat and good white bread ; we have only chaff and straw, and water to drink. They live in fine houses, where they are warm and comfortable ; we labour in the fields, and the wind and the rain beat upon us. Yet by our work do they live. They call us their bondmen, and if we refuse to work for them they beat us. Now, let us go to our King, young Richard, and tell him our woes. We will show him how we are treated, and ask him to give us justice. Let us all go together. Perhaps when the King sees us he will listen to our words.”

John Ball was taken and cast into prison for speaking in this manner ; but as soon as he was free he began to do the same thing again. So the Archbishop of Canterbury caused him to be locked up once more.

But his words had done their work, and all over the country the poor people were thinking that what he said was quite true.

II.—WAT TYLER IN LONDON.

While the peasants of England were in this discontented state, King Richard ordered a new tax to be laid upon the people. This tax was called the “poll-tax,” because it was reckoned at so much per head (*poll* means *head*). No matter whether the person were rich or poor, he had to pay this tax, and all paid the same amount. The poor peasant, although he had very often hard work to keep himself alive, paid no less than the rich lord.

There had been poll-taxes before this one, but the people had not grumbled so much about them, because they had not been so unfair. Formerly, these taxes were so arranged that the greater burden fell upon the rich. A nobleman like John of Gaunt had to pay no less than six pounds, while a poor labourer only paid fourpence. This time, however, the peasants murmured loudly. Their lives were already hard, and their burdens heavy to bear; and this tax made their sufferings even greater than before.

At last the smouldering fire of discontent burst out into open flame.

The men appointed to collect the poll-tax were often brutal and rough. The peasants had, therefore, a double reason to hate them: first, because they collected an unfair tax; and second, because of their brutality and rudeness.

One of these tax-collectors went to the house of Wat Tyler, "who was indeed a *tiler* of houses," and who lived in Kent. While he was collecting the money this man ill-treated Wat Tyler's daughter. The girl screamed aloud for help, and her father, running in with his tiler's axe in his hand, struck the collector such an angry blow upon the head that the man fell dead.

Seeing what he had done, Wat Tyler fled from the house, and told his neighbours. He knew that if he were caught he would be hanged, and so he persuaded his friends to gather round him, and to march to London, as John Ball had told them to do.

The peasants were very ready to break out in rebellion. They only needed a leader, and when they found that a leader had appeared, in the person of Wat Tyler, they flocked to him in crowds. In a very short time he found himself at the head of an army of several thousand men.

It was a very ragged army, but a very earnest one. Although the men had no arms but pitchforks and pikes, rusty swords and axes, wooden clubs and featherless arrows, they were terrible, because they felt that right was on their side, and because they were willing to die in the cause of freedom.

On the way to London a priest named Jack Straw joined Wat Tyler, bringing another large army of peasants with him. The force then marched to Canterbury, where John Ball was lying in the Archbishop's prison.

The Archbishop of Canterbury at that time was the chief lawyer in England. The peasants hated lawyers,

for a reason we have already told, and wished to catch the Archbishop and put him to death. They found, however, that he had gone to London. Furious with rage because their great enemy had escaped them, the peasants broke down the gates of the prison, released John Ball, and surged into the Archbishop's palace.

Into room after room they poured, tearing the rich hangings, smashing the furniture, and leaving the place almost a wreck. Then they swept on to London, swearing that they would yet capture the Archbishop, and force him to account to them for all the money that had passed through his hands.

So fiercely did these poor ignorant peasants hate the priests and the lawyers that, on their way, they sacked every abbey in their path. They sought out the great chests in which the Abbey records were kept, and, having found the parchments, covered with Latin writing, which they could not read, they made a bonfire of them. No man who could read or write was safe from them. Any such man who came in their way they hanged as a priest or a lawyer, for they thought that all educated men were their natural enemies.

As they drew nearer to London, the disorderly crowd became more savage than ever. Every hour labourers from different parts of the country flocked to join the peasants' army; so that when the spires of London came in sight, Wat Tyler was at the head of nearly a hundred thousand men.

The citizens of London were very much alarmed. They hastened to shut the gates of the city, to keep the peasants out. But the poorer men in the city flung the gates open, and, shouting and cheering, the thousands

of ragged men poured across London Bridge into the streets of the great city, which lay at their mercy.

Young King Richard shut himself up in the Tower of London. With him were several of his nobles, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Mayor, whose name was William Walworth. All night the crowd surged at the Tower gates, crying for the King, calling to him to come forth and speak to them. All night, in fear and horror, the King and the handful of soldiers with him remained in the Tower, longing for the day, and wondering what the morning would bring.

Meanwhile, another part of the army rushed along the Strand towards the beautiful palace of the Savoy, which they burnt to the ground. Every lawyer that could be found was hanged. The houses of the foreign merchants were burnt to the ground. The crowd marched to Lombard Street, where the money-lenders had their offices, burnt these, and killed their owners.

But at first the peasants did not forget the reason for which they had taken up arms. A man who had been at the burning of the Savoy Palace was found carrying a silver vessel which he had stolen. His companions seized him, and threw him, with his booty, into the flames.

"We are not thieves and robbers, but honest men!" they cried. "We are not come out to steal, but to ask for justice."

Outside the Tower of London the crowd still raged. Early in the morning the King left, and went to Mile End to meet the peasants; but now the angry crowd shouted for the Archbishop of Canterbury. "Bring out the Archbishop!" they yelled again and again.

At last the frightened guards opened the gates, and the shouting crowd streamed through. They entered chamber after chamber, smashing the furniture, breaking down locked doors, seeking their enemy in every place.

They found him in the chapel, on his knees before the altar. As he heard the tramping of feet and the cries of his enemies, he rose to meet them.

“I am here, my children,” he said quietly. “What do you want of me?”

Rough hands seized him and dragged him out. As he was brought into the open-air the crowds packed upon Tower Hill shrieked for his death. He pleaded hard for his life, but all his words availed him nothing.

“Thou art a false traitor!” shouted his captors, “and thou must die!” Then they struck off his head, and set it on a spear-point high upon London Bridge.

III.—THE BRAVE YOUNG KING.

Wat Tyler's army had divided into three bands. Jack Straw, with his men, camped outside the walls of London, at Highbury. The rest of the men remained in London—some of them at Tower Hill and some at Mile End, which was then an open place. To Mile End the young King, with a few of his nobles, rode to meet the rebels.

“Good people,” he cried, “I am your King. What do ye lack?”

“We will that you free us for ever,” answered the

people, "both ourselves and our lands, and that we be no longer serfs or bondmen."

"Sirs," answered the King, "I will agree to what you ask. Return home in peace to your houses, leaving behind one or two men from each village. I will cause writings to be made, and seal them with my seal. And these writings shall insure you the freedom you demand."

The people were pleased with these words, and many of them began to return to their homes at once. All day long thirty clerks were at work writing the letters which the King had promised to the people. What the value of the King's promises was, and how much these letters were worth, we shall see later on.

But all the peasants did not leave London. Many thousands of them still remained in the city. It was said that Wat Tyler was not yet satisfied, and that he had ideas of making a new Government, under which there should be no rich and no poor, but all men should be equal and all goods in common.

He had brought together about 20,000 men at Smithfield. The King was about to leave London, but when he heard that all these men were there, he determined to go among them and see if he could not bring them to a peaceful frame of mind. So, accompanied by some of his nobles and friends, among whom was William Walworth, Mayor of London, he rode among the crowd.

When Wat Tyler saw the King approach, he rode to the front to meet him, and came so near to him that his horse's head touched the head of the King's charger.

“Sir King,” said Wat Tyler, waving his hand towards the densely packed ranks of his men, “seest thou all yonder people?”

“Yes, truly,” answered the King. “Why do you ask me that?”

“Because,” answered Tyler, “they are men who have sworn to do my bidding, whatever may happen. Do you think that all those men will return to their homes without that for which they came?”

“I have promised them freedom,” answered the King, “and I will keep my promise. Writings are even now being prepared, and they will be delivered to the people in good time. Tell your men, therefore, to depart out of London in peace.”

Wat Tyler was carried away with the great power he possessed. Success had turned his head, and he became insolent. Turning to one of the King’s gentlemen, he said :

“Give me your dagger.”

“Nay, that will I not !” answered the squire.

Wat Tyler struck at him in anger, and, seeing the action, William Walworth spurred his horse forward, and, drawing his dagger, stabbed Tyler in the breast. The peasant fell from his horse, and some of the King’s men leaped from their steeds and killed him as he lay upon the ground.

A great cry rang from the ranks of the peasants as they saw their leader fall.

“Our Captain is slain !” they cried. “Now let us slay those who have killed him !”

Then the boy King did a very brave thing. Without a trace of fear he spurred his horse and rode

towards the scowling crowd. All round him steel flashed. Before him the densely packed ranks of the peasants reeled and swayed. Clenched fists were shaken at him, coarse threats shouted. A thousand arrows were levelled at his heart. He took no heed.

"I am your captain and your King!" he cried, in a clear, ringing voice. "Follow me, and I will lead you!"

For a moment it was doubtful what the result of this bravery would be. But the King's noble look, his courage, his beauty, as he sat there, serene and calm upon his white charger, touched the people's hearts. Bows were lowered, swords were sheathed, and soon the murmurs of hate gave place to a ringing cheer.

Well would it have been for the peasants if the King's faith had been as undoubted as his courage. The crowd melted away, and the peasants, armed with their letters of freedom, went joyfully back to their homes.

But the end was not yet. The King had now regained his power, for a great army of soldiers had come to help him. Jack Straw and John Ball were taken and hanged. The peasants were pursued and brought in batches to execution. When some of them showed the King the letters of freedom he had given, he laughed scornfully.

"Serfs ye were," he said, "and serfs ye shall remain as long as I am King. And henceforth your bondage shall be worse than ever before!"

Then the King marched through Kent and Essex,

hanging and torturing those who had dared to rise against his power.

Yet Wat Tyler's rebellion was not without result. From that time the lords began to see that the poorer people of England must be treated more like men and less like slaves. From that time on, gradually the peasant grew in freedom. A hundred years later there were no longer any serfs or bondmen in England.

SIR RICHARD WHITTINGTON.

I.—EARLY LIFE.

Most boys and girls know the story of Dick Whittington, the poor lad who came to London to seek his fortune, and who afterwards became three times Lord Mayor of that city.

Not many years ago a little boy* read that story, and was deeply interested in it. He spoke to his mother about it, and to some of his grown-up friends. These all told him that the story was not true.

“It is a very pretty story,” they said; “but, of course, it is only a fable.”

The little boy was very sorry to hear this. He had taken such an interest in Dick Whittington that the hero was very real to him.

When he grew up to be a man, he still remembered the story he had enjoyed so much as a boy, and he determined to find out whether there was any truth in it or not. So he went to the libraries and to other places where old books and papers are kept, and searched there.

He turned over many dusty old papers and parch-

* Samuel Lysons, who afterwards wrote the first authoritative life of Richard Whittington.

ments covered with writing, which was very difficult to understand. He looked into many old books, and read letters whose writers had been dead hundreds of years.

After a lot of hard work he found that he himself was able to write a life of Dick Whittington. And when boys and girls read *his* book, and spoke to their elders about it, no one would be able to say that it was only a fable, for he had found out the true facts of Dick Whittington's life.

Richard Whittington was born at Pauntley, in Gloucestershire, in the reign of Edward III. He was a younger son of Sir William Whittington, a knight of gentle birth, so, you see, he was not quite so poor and friendless as the well-known story makes him out to be.

The Whittington family lived on their own lands. Round their house stretched broad fields, in which they grew corn and grain. The orchards were full of fruit-trees. Dick must have climbed those trees many a time; and, in the autumn, perhaps he helped to gather the apples for the cider-making, and watched the presses squeezing out the sweet juice.

A happy life the young boy led among the fields and woods of his father's estate. In the summer-time he would watch his father's men making hay in the fields, and chase the butterflies that flitted over the poppies—for boys in that far-away time loved to do the same things as boys of to-day. Sometimes he would wander in the woods; and there, if he stepped quietly, he would often be able to see a noble stag, which, with

antlered head erect, and wide nostrils, stared at him for a moment before dashing into the depths of the wood.

Now and again Dick would be able to watch a hunting-party out with horse and hounds after the deer. But that would not be very often, for the deer was the King's animal, and common men were not allowed to kill it. A more common sight would be that of his elder brothers, each with a hooded hawk on his wrist, setting off for a day's sport. Perhaps before they were out of sight of the house a bird would rise from the brushwood; and then Dick would see the hood taken from the hawk's eyes, and watch the fierce bird rise in the air and circle once or twice, before dropping straight and swift as an arrow upon its prey.

While Dick was still only a little boy his father died, leaving his lands and money to his widow and Dick's elder brothers. So when Dick grew up, it was necessary for the lad to look out for some way of earning his own living.

In those days there were not very many ways in which a young lad of gentle birth might earn a living. If his father had rich friends, the boy might perhaps become a page in the household of one of them, as you will remember young Chaucer did. Then in time he would become a squire—that is, a knight's servant. When his master rode out to war he would bear his shield and helmet; and in the time of battle, though he would not fight himself, he would remain near his master, to give him warning of danger, and to bring him such fresh arms as he needed. If a squire proved himself brave and loyal, he “won his spurs”—that is,

he was made a knight, when he would fight in the King's wars, and have squires and pages of his own.

But Dick Whittington could not become a soldier because he had not enough money—he was only a younger son, and had no broad lands. He might have gone into a monastery and become a monk, but Dick had no taste for that life. There was still one other position open to young men of good birth, and that was a position as companion to the son of a great noble. One of the duties of a lad in a position like this was sometimes to bear the whipping which his young master had deserved.

Richard Whittington, however, did not take advantage of any of these ways of earning a living. His mother had a relation in London, a worthy man named Fitzwarren. This man was a merchant, and Dick thought that he would like to go to him to learn his business.

So, when he was only thirteen years of age, Dick set out with a few shillings in his pocket to seek his fortune in London town.

Travelling in those days was much more difficult and dangerous than it is to-day. There were no railway-trains, or even coaches. When a rich man travelled from one place to another he rode on horseback. If his wife went with him, she rode behind him on the same horse, or by his side on another. Poor people had to travel on foot, unless they could get a lift on one of the pack-waggons that lumbered slowly along the high-roads, laden with wool for the London markets.

Whether the traveller rode on horseback or trudged along on foot, he always went well armed if he bore

any valuables with him. The roads, in many cases, passed through forest lands, and robbers hid themselves among the trees. Edward III. had ordered that all trees and brushwood should be cleared away for the space of a bow-shot on either side of the road. This was to save travellers from surprise ; but, in spite of it, many robberies occurred.

An adventure which happened to Richard's own brother shows that the danger of being attacked by these robbers was a very real one.

Robert Whittington and his son Guy were once travelling, when they were set upon by thirty men, and robbed of all they possessed. They were then tightly bound, and carried to a hill on which stood a deserted chapel. There they were left all night.

The next day the robbers returned, and told their prisoners that they would be killed unless they were willing to pay a large sum as a ransom. Guy was set free, and allowed to return home to collect the money. But he was told that if he returned with any help, his father would be immediately slain. Guy set out, and was fortunately able to return, bringing the ransom money with him—a sum of £600. Father and son were then set free, and allowed to return to their homes unharmed.

It is not likely that Dick was very much afraid of robbers. He knew that he had little that was worth stealing, and, no doubt, trusted to be left alone.

The journey from Pauntley to London took about four days. Every night, after the day's walk, Dick would have to put up at an inn for the night. Tired, hungry, and thirsty as he was, it must have been a

welcome sight to see the rough wooden building on the wayside, with the bunch of green-stuff over the door. For few country inns had signs, but were marked by a bush of green branches, tied round a rod, and sticking out much in the same way as the red and white pole does outside a barber's shop.

Arrived at the inn, Dick would buy food, and cook it himself over the kitchen fire. All sorts of people would be gathered together in the wide room, with its raftered roof and large fireplace. Some of them, like Dick himself, would be travellers on the way to London. There might be a labourer or two, and perhaps even a juggler, on his way to a town fair, who, after supper, would stand on his head, or swallow a knife, or do something else equally amazing.

When supper was done, Dick would have to stretch himself out on the floor beside his chance companions, for that was all the bed he would get. In the morning, as soon as the sun rose, he would be awake, and, having paid his score, on the road for London once again.

This was an adventurous kind of journey for a boy of thirteen, was it not? But Dick was quite used to the life, and at the end of the fourth day entered London by way of Oxford Street and Newgate.

Oxford Street was then a country road, leading from London to Oxford. It wound through pleasant green fields, and was lined on either side by trees and hedge-rows. Newgate was really a new gate, for at that time London was surrounded by a thick wall. The wall is gone now, but we can easily find out just where it was, and where the gates were that led through it. For though these gates have long since disappeared,

their names still remain, and when we hear of Bishops-gate, Aldgate, Cripplegate, Moorgate, and Billingsgate, we think of the wonderful changes that the years have made in our great city.

II.—THE APPRENTICE.

Sir John Fitzwarren was a mercer. A mercer was a merchant who dealt in "merceries"—that is, in woollen and silken stuffs, linen, ribbons, laces, and all sorts of other things from pins to cloth of gold. He had agents in the great merchant cities of Flanders and Italy, such as Bruges and Genoa ; and he bought silk and satin stuffs, beautifully embroidered and worked, and rich velvets from the foreign merchants.

Whittington entered London, and went straight to the mercer's shop in Cheap. "Cheap," or Cheapside, as we call it to-day, was then the chief trading street in London. On either side of it were the shops of the merchants, and outside the shops were stalls and booths.

After the quiet life of a country village, Dick must have been a little confused by the bustle and noise as he walked down Cheapside. Outside the shops of the merchants stood their 'prentice-lads, each eager to buttonhole the passer-by and draw him into his master's shop. The loud cries of the apprentices, each shouting, "What do ye lack?" the busy din of the great market, and the crowd of buyers, were all new to Dick, and no doubt he gazed about him with very curious eyes, and took quite a long time before he came to Fitzwarren's house.

But he arrived there at last, and in a day or two had quite settled down to his new work. The city apprentices were all of them lads of good family, for only the sons of gentlemen were allowed to be apprenticed. They were bound to their masters for a certain number of years. They promised to be obedient, to work with industry and perseverance, and always to do their duty. On his part, the master undertook to feed and clothe his apprentice, and to teach him as much as he could of the business he was afterwards to follow.

Dick Whittington found that his duties were not at all light. Every morning at six o'clock work began. Besides his work in the shop, the lad had to do many menial tasks for his master, such as scrubbing the floor, brushing out the shop, and scouring the brass cooking-pans.

At eight o'clock in the evening the curfew chimes were rung on Bow Bells, and that was a signal to finish work for the day. Sometimes the 'prentices thought that Bow Bells were rung late. When they were anxious to get away from the stuffy shops for a walk in the streets, the time seemed very long before the welcome bell sounded. Once some of them wrote to the bell-ringer to tell him that he must be more punctual in his ringing. This is what they said:

“ Clerk of the Bow Bells,
With the yellow locks,
For thy late ringing
Thou shalt have knocks.”

The yellow-haired bell-ringer took the reproof in good part, and replied to the apprentices in a verse as good as their own:

“ Children of Cheap,
Hold you all still ;
For you shall have Bow Bells
Rung at your will.”

Though the work of the apprentices was hard, they had many holidays. England was “ Merrie England ” then, and the men and women of the time lost no chance of enjoying themselves in a healthy and whole-hearted way.

One of the most enjoyable of these holidays was held on the first of May. On the evening before that day the 'prentices made ready for the rejoicings. They set up the maypole, and draped it with ribbons of many colours and garlands of green. Then, on the day itself, what fun there was ! The lads and lassies joined hands and danced round the maypole, singing merry songs. Processions of men clothed in green and bearing budding branches marched through Cheapside, and everywhere was mirth and jollity.

At Christmas-time, too, the 'prentice-lads enjoyed themselves mightily. There were skating and sliding and snowballing on the Moorfields outside Moorgate. There was the carol-singing on Christmas Eve, when the lads marched from house to house, bearing lanterns in their hands, and singing the message of “ peace on earth, good-will towards men.”

For a country-bred boy such as Dick Whittington there was always something new to see, always something to interest or amuse. Many a time, on holidays, must he have gone off with his companions to the green fields beyond the walls of London, there to play at quarter-staff and single-stick. And no doubt his nose

was made to bleed many a time, and many a sore head he carried home for his pains !

Then there was shooting at the butts with the long-bow. This took place every week on Moorfields. For every 'prentice-lad was supposed to be able to draw a bow, and shoot an arrow straight to the mark. Some holidays would be spent in the forest, climbing the trees, looking for birds' nests, and playing hide-and-seek among the bushes.

Some of the sports at which the apprentices played were rough and cruel, and it is a good thing that people no longer amuse themselves in such ways. Cock-fighting was one of these ; and others were bear and bull baiting, when a bear or a bull was chained to a pole, and a pack of dogs set on to worry it.

On Lord Mayor's Day a wonderful "riding" was held in Cheapside. There were men of all the City companies, clothed in dresses of brilliant colours ; there were soldiers in armour on horseback, and bands of music. On Lord Mayor's Day the apprentices had a holiday, and enjoyed themselves mightily. They cheered the Mayor, and watched the showmen and jugglers who performed in the streets. The houses and shops were all hung with flags and banners, and sometimes the water-pipes ran with wine instead of water.

Geoffrey Chaucer tells us of the way a City apprentice enjoyed himself on these happy days. He says :

" When there any ridings were in Cheap,
Out of the shop thither would he leap ;
And till that he had all the sights seen,
And danced well, he would not come again."

Dick Whittington saw some sad sights in Cheapside, as well as some merry ones. Very often he would see a poor wretch standing in the pillory. This was a kind of board raised upon a platform. In this board the prisoner was held fast, his head through one hole and his hands through two others.

This form of punishment was very common in those days, but, happily, it is never used now. If the prisoner had committed a bad crime, if he had sold bad meat, or mixed dust with flour so as to gain a dishonest profit, or given short weight, the people would sometimes gather round the pillory and pelt the poor fellow with stones and rotten eggs.

III.—WHITTINGTON ATTAINS WEALTH AND POWER.

And now we come to the story of Dick Whittington's cat. You all know it very well. No doubt you think it the best part of Whittington's history, and wonder whether it is true.

The old story tells us that Whittington's master, Sir John Fitwzarren, every year fitted out a ship with goods for a voyage to foreign countries. When the ship was ready to sail, he went to all his servants, and asked them if there was anything they would like to send with the ship to be sold in foreign parts. One sent one thing, and one another, but poor Dick Whittington had nothing to send.

At last he thought of his cat, of which he was very fond. He had bought it for a penny, and it had lived with him ever since he had been in London. He did

not wish to part with the faithful animal, but at last he brought it and gave it to the captain of the ship.

The vessel set sail, and in course of time arrived at a country on the coast of Africa. There the sailors cast anchor, for they wished to sell the goods they carried to the King of those parts. The King had been very eagerly awaiting the coming of the ship, and when he heard that it was in harbour, he made a great feast, and invited the captain and sailors to come to it. There were all sorts of dainty foods spread out in gold and silver dishes upon a beautiful white cloth.

But, alas ! that country was full of rats. By no means could these pests be got rid of ; and no sooner was the food put upon the table than scores of enormous rats ran over the cloth, and gobbled up all the meats and bread before the eyes of the King and his guests.

Then the captain thought of Dick's cat, which he had left on board the ship.

"I have a little animal on my vessel," he told the King, "who will soon get rid of those rats for you."

He sent a sailor down to the ship to fetch the cat. As soon as the sailor returned, he put pussy down on the ground. She sprang at the rats, and killed two before the rest knew what had happened. They ran frightened and squealing in all directions, pussy after them, while the King watched in huge delight.

When the time came for the captain to return to England, the King offered him a bag of gold if he would leave pussy behind. This the captain was very glad to do. He sailed home to London town, gave Dick the bag of money, and so the 'prentice lad laid the foundations of his fortune.

It this story true, or is it only a fable? Well, there is no reason why it should not be true. Some people have said that Dick Whittington never had a cat at all. They say that the story of the cat has risen because of the old French word for purchase, *acate*. Dick, they say, became rich because of his *acates*, or careful purchases. Others have told us that Dick's cat was a ship—as vessels which carried coal were sometimes called “cats.” But it is not likely that a mercer would have anything to do with buying or selling coal.

In those days cats were rare in England, and were thought a great deal of because of their powers of catching mice. We know, too, that in some distant lands there was no such thing as a cat to be seen, and that such countries were very much troubled with rats and mice. In that case we can easily see that a cat might well be sold for a considerable sum of money.

Dick Whittington, all through his life, showed himself a splendid business man. It is very likely that he heard that it was possible to sell a cat for a good sum, that he saved up to buy one, and that he ventured it in the way we have told. How much he got for it we do not know.

There is another story of Dick Whittington which is also probably true—the story of the Bow Bells and what they said to him. The old tale tells how he took a walk out of London, and sat down to rest upon Highgate Hill.

“Below him, four miles away, he sees the grey walls of London town; beyond the walls a forest of spires; in every church are the bones of those who

died rich after fighting the battle of freedom. . . . Beyond the city there is another forest, the forest of masts. Hundreds of English vessels are there, loading and unloading. They belong to his master and his master's friends.

"Then there comes a message to the boy. It comes with the clash and clang of Bow Bells, and cries aloud : 'Whittington, Whittington, Whittington, Lord Mayor of London !'

"Ring again bells, mellowed by the distance, and charged with words so sweet ! Turn again, boy. Go home to work, that message ringing in thy brain, in patience and in trust."*

Dick did return to London, and soon showed by his industry and perseverance that he meant to succeed. The lucky venture with the cat, if, indeed, he really made it, was the beginning of his prosperity. At the age of twenty-one he left his master and set up in business for himself.

From that time forward Richard Whittington never looked back. By hard work, courage, and industry he made himself a rich man, and so upright was he in all his dealings that he has well been called "The Model Merchant of the Middle Ages."

Sir John Fitzwarren was very proud of the boy whom he taught to be a mercer. And when Whittington was grown to be a man, and was able to keep a wife, he gave him his daughter Alice in marriage. The old story tells us that Dick and Alice had been friends for many years, and that the rich merchant's

* From "The Life of Richard Whittington," by Walter Besant and James Rice.

daughter had, from the very first, taken a deep interest in the boy, who, poor and without friends, had come to her father's house.

Even as the bells had promised, Whittington became three times Lord Mayor of London : once in 1397, again in 1406, and again in 1419. Then he himself rode in stately procession through Cheapside, and was cheered by the 'prentice lads.

Every one of them knew how he had succeeded by his own honest effort, and the example of Whittington's life no doubt led many of them to pay greater attention to their work, in the hope that they too might succeed, even as he had done. For this is the great virtue of a good man's life, that his example cheers others along the difficult path that leads to honour.

Like most other rich men of his time, Richard Whittington was a banker. He lent money to his friends, and took care of their money for them if they wished him to do so. When he was only twenty-eight years of age he was already rich enough to lend an uncle £500. This would have been equal to about £5,000 of our own money.

It is very likely that the great victory of Agincourt would not have been won but for Whittington. For Henry V. was in great need of money to carry on the French wars. He had even pledged his crown and his royal jewels. Whittington, however, lent him the money he needed.

It is said that, after Henry's return from France, Whittington, who by this time had become Sir Richard, invited the King and Queen to a feast. He received them in a splendid chamber, hung with rich tapestries.

At one end of the room a fire was burning, fed with cedar and other perfumed woods.

After the feast was done, Whittington took the bonds which he had received in exchange for the money lent to the King, and threw them into the fire. This was his way of showing that he did not wish the King to repay him the loan.

“Never had King such a subject,” said Henry, in surprise at the generous deed.

“And never had subject such a King,” loyally answered Sir Richard.

Whittington was the first man to set up a drinking-fountain in the City of London. He caused a tap to be placed upon the waterpipe at St. Giles in Cripplegate, so that people might slake their thirst.

He was also the first man to establish a public library. Printing had not been invented at that time, and all books were copied by hand. This made them very dear. The books in Whittington’s library of the Grey Friars at Newgate cost £500, and nearly all this money was paid by Whittington himself.

He also founded another library at the Guildhall, London. There is a splendid library there now, but the building in which the books are kept is quite new.

Sir Richard always loved and helped the poor. Perhaps he remembered the time when he was poor himself. He gave away large sums of money in charity, and in other ways showed that the poor man’s cause was ever close to his heart.

Near the gate by which, as a boy, he had entered

London, there stood Newgate Prison. A foul den it was, reeking with disease and horribly filthy. If a man were imprisoned there it was very likely that he would never come out alive, but would die of gaol-fever. This disease attacked not only the prisoners, but the citizens of London as well. Yet no one thought of rebuilding the prison, or making rules so that it might be kept sweeter and cleaner. As soon as Whittington became a powerful man he took this matter in hand, and was able to effect a change for the better. At his death he left a sum of money for the rebuilding and enlargement of the prison.

He also repaired, at his own cost, the Hospital of St. Bartholomew's, in Smithfield.

To the very end of his life he was earnest in fighting against dishonest trading, and often caused men who had sold bad meat, or given short weight, to be punished. The poor, the suffering, and the needy looked to him as their champion, for he never refused to give them any help within his power.

None were so low but that his pity went out to them. He thought of the prisoners dying of fever in Newgate, and of the sick in the hospitals. Of him it might truly have been said :

“I was an hungered, and ye gave Me meat. I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink. I was a stranger, and ye took Me in ; naked, and ye clothed Me : I was sick, and ye visited Me : I was in prison, and ye came unto Me. Verily, I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me.”

JOAN OF ARC.

I.—THE PEASANT GIRL.

AT the beginning of the reign of Henry VI., France and England were still carrying on the war which Edward III. had begun nearly a hundred years before.

By this time the English were masters of a great part of France. Henry V. had claimed the throne, although he had not the shadow of a right to it. He won the famous victory of Agincourt. The French King Charles was a poor madman. The French people were disheartened and miserable, and at last it was agreed that Henry should be King of France on the death of Charles.

Henry V., however, died before the French King, leaving his baby son to reign. A few months later Charles VI. of France also died, and his son, who was called the Dauphin, refused to acknowledge the English claims. And so the cruel war dragged on, and peace seemed as far off as ever.

The French people had suffered very much from the constant fighting which had taken place in their country. Rich towns had been burnt, and fertile fields laid waste. The English soldiers were everywhere, and, when they had no longer a strong leader like Henry V. to keep them in order, they plundered and

robbed as they liked. Many of the French farmers, finding that their crops had been destroyed and their houses burnt, took to the woods and lived as robbers.

Charles, the Dauphin of France, was an indolent young man, not at all fitted to lead a despairing people. He kept up the struggle with the English, but only in a very half-hearted way. He liked to lead an easy life, to dress in splendid clothes, to eat and drink well, and to spend his time in idle amusement. He had no power to cheer his people on to fight for their liberty. They thought of him with scorn, for they well knew how worthless he was.

And so the English were once again victorious in almost every battle they fought. Only a part of the south of France still held out, and it was not likely that the struggle would continue much longer; for the English army laid siege to Orleans, the chief of the towns still held by the Dauphin.

The story of the siege of Orleans plainly shows that the French had lost all heart. There were more Frenchmen in the town than there were English outside it. Yet the French soldiers made no attempt to come from behind their walls and drive the English away. They remained within the city until they were almost starved. Then they made offers to surrender.

It was just at this stage that a poor peasant girl, only seventeen years of age, came to the help of her countrymen, and did what princes and nobles had failed to do.

Joan d'Arc was born in the year 1412 at Domremy, a little village on the eastern border of France. Her

father was a small peasant farmer, and he had three sons and two daughters, of whom Joan was the younger.

As a little girl Joan was not so very much different from other children, except that perhaps she was a little more thoughtful. Her beloved mother, Isabel, taught her to sew and to embroider, so that Joan became as clever with her needle as any girl in the countryside. From her mother, too, Joan learned to offer up her simple prayers to God, for her mother was a good woman, and she wanted her little girl to grow up to be a good woman also.

Often in the warm summer days little Joan would lead her father's sheep into the fields and woods to find pasture. Then she would sit down under a shady tree, and watch the sheep as they fed, while her busy fingers worked away at her sewing. And in the quiet evening, when the sun was low in the west, and it was almost time to return home, Joan would still linger on. For she loved the sound of the evening bells that were rung in the little church near by.

Sweet and clear through the evening silence came the chime of those bells, and, as she listened, the little girl's face brightened, and her eyes shone, and she clasped her hands in wonder and delight at the beauty of the music. Once or twice Joan waited for the bells in vain, for the careless bell-ringer forgot to ring them. That made Joan very sad, and at last she took him a little present, and asked him to be sure and not forget to ring them in future.

Never was a little girl more loved than Joan. The birds in the forest would fly down from the trees

and feed from her hand. The men and women of the village loved her because she was so kind. If anyone were sick, Joan would visit him, and sit by his bedside, speaking words of cheer. There was one poor old man, who had been an invalid for many years, and Joan nursed him as cleverly as though she had been trained to the work.

Now and again this peaceful life was disturbed by echoes of the cruel war that raged in France. Soldiers tramped through the village, rough men of coarse speech, with hard faces and fierce eyes. Sometimes, when there had been fighting, wounded men were brought into the houses of the peasants. One day a wounded soldier was carried to Joan's house. There was no room for him, for all the beds were used by the farmer and his family ; but Joan gave up her own bed to the soldier, and herself slept on the floor by the hearth.

So the time passed until Joan was thirteen years old, and then a change came into her life.

One summer afternoon she sat, as was her custom, in the fields, watching her flock and listening to the church bells. Never had the chimes sounded so sweetly before. As the clear notes rang out, Joan's mind was filled with wonderful thoughts. The bells seemed to speak to her of the angels of heaven, and she thought of the pictured saints in the church window, with wings of pearly whiteness, and glorious robes of purple and red and gold.

The last faint note had died away into silence, when suddenly Joan seemed to hear a voice speaking at her side. At first she was frightened, for she

could see no one. But when the voice came three times, she knew that there was nothing to fear.

“Joan,” it said, “be a good girl. Go often to church.”

From that time forward the strange voices often came to speak to Joan as she sat out of doors in the sunshine. She became quite used to them at last, and thought of them as “my voices.” But at first she did not tell anybody what she had heard.

For a long time Joan heard the voices, but saw nothing. One day, however, the voice came, and at the same time she saw a blaze of dazzling light. And in the midst of the light shone the face of an angel.

This time the voice told her of the great pity that there was in France. It told her of the sufferings which her countrymen had undergone, and called upon her to go to help.

The child was greatly puzzled. “I am only a poor girl,” she said. “How can I lead armed men? I cannot ride or fight.”

But still the voices came again and again, and pressed her to go. And still she wondered what to do, and wept and wrung her hands because of her helplessness. This went on for four years, until at last Joan made up her mind to do as the voices told her, and go to the help of France.

II.—THE MAID AT CHINON.

Joan's voices had told her that she must go to a town near her village, where there were a number of French soldiers. She was to seek out the Captain.

tell him her story, and ask him to send her to the Dauphin.

But how was a poor peasant girl to get to see the captain? Joan thought the matter over, and at last made up her mind to tell her uncle all about her voices, and try to get his help. Accordingly, she went to this man, whose name was Durand, and told him all.

The simple-minded peasant listened in great surprise to what Joan had to say. He did not for a moment disbelieve her, but he felt that it would be foolish to go to the French Captain, who would only laugh at the maid. Joan was so earnest, however, and seemed so confident of success, that at last Durand agreed to go with her to the town.

Soon afterwards the two set out, Joan dressed in a gown of coarse red homespun, walking at her uncle's side. At this time the maid was a healthy girl of seventeen years. She was not very tall, but her figure was well knit, and she carried herself with an ease that showed great strength and power of endurance. Her face was round, and her eyes and hair dark. To the many people whom she passed on the road she must have appeared just an ordinary country girl. They could not have guessed from her appearance that this was she who was to save France.

When they arrived at the town they found the courtyard in front of the Governor's house thronged with soldiers, who stared at the girl, and roughly asked her what her business was. She replied that she wanted to see the Captain, and after some trouble and delay she was admitted to his presence.

Her uncle went with her, and, of the two, he was the

more afraid. Joan bore herself bravely. She had no doubt that she was doing rightly, for her voices had told her she was to come to the aid of her stricken country.

The Captain looked curiously at her, and asked her what she wanted. She answered, very simply, that she had been sent to deliver the Dauphin from his enemies.

“Send and tell the Prince,” she said, “to wait, and not to give battle to the English, because God will give him help before Mid-Lent. The kingdom does not belong to the Dauphin, but to my Lord. But my Lord wills that the Dauphin shall be King, and hold it in trust. In spite of his enemies, he shall prevail. And I myself shall lead him to be crowned.”

“And who is your Lord?” asked the Governor.

She answered him: “It is the King of Heaven.”

The rough soldier burst into a roar of laughter.

“Take her back to her mother,” he said to Durand, “and tell her to give the foolish child a good whipping.”

Durand led the girl away. As they passed through the hall, the soldiers smiled, and those in the courtyard outside, who had heard the news of her mission, openly jeered.

So Joan was forced to return to her home without having attained her object. But she did not despair.

A little while afterwards Joan went once again to the town to see the Governor. Everybody knew her mission now, and crowds followed the girl as she made her way through the streets. Some jeered and laughed, but others were silent, because they remembered her goodness and kindness.

"I must go to the Dauphin," she told the Governor, "even though I wear my limbs to the knees."

But still the Governor would not listen to her, and sent her away.

One day, as she came out of the Governor's house, a captain stopped her. He was a rough man, but a kindly one.

"What are you doing here, my child?" he asked, and went on to make a jest about her mission. Joan looked at him appealingly as she told him her story.

"Indeed and indeed, I would rather stay at home and help my mother to spin," she said; "but I must go, for it is my Lord's will."

"Who is your Lord?" asked the soldier.

And she answered him simply, as she had answered the Governor: "It is God."

Something in her look, in the direct gaze of her eyes, in her simple, serious manner, moved the rough man-at-arms. Suddenly he clasped her hands in both of his and vowed to help her.

"When do you wish to go?" he asked.

"Rather to-day than to-morrow," answered the maid.

The Captain persuaded the Governor to help the girl to reach the Dauphin, and at last, thinking that if she did no good, at any rate she would do no harm, the Governor consented. He gave her a horse, a sword, and a letter to the King, and bade her set forth.

"Go; and let come what may!" was his parting greeting.

In order that she might the more safely travel along

the roads, which were dangerous and infested with robbers, Joan dressed herself as a boy. Six faithful men went with her, and, before long, she had come, without hurt, to Chinon, where the Dauphin was staying. But now she found that the nobles would not let her see the King. She was kept waiting for two days before she was finally brought into the Dauphin's presence.

It was evening, and the great chamber in which the Prince and his nobles were assembled shone with the blaze of fifty torches. Three hundred gaily dressed knights crowded the room. The Dauphin himself had descended from the dais, and was talking with some of his courtiers. Joan made her way through the staring, whispering crowd directly to the Dauphin and knelt at his feet.

"Gentle Prince," she said, "my name is Joan the Maid. The King of Heaven has sent me to tell you that you shall yet be King of France, and that you shall be anointed and crowned in the town of Rheims."

The Prince drew back. "*That* is the Dauphin, not I," he said, pointing to a richly-dressed knight, who stood near.

Joan did not even look. "It is you, and no other," she answered.

The Dauphin drew her to the end of the hall, and spoke with her apart for some time. Then she was sent to a lodging in the town, and another period of waiting followed. The nobles and priests at first were all against her, and a court was held at Poitiers to examine her statements and see if she spoke the truth. The girl's seriousness, honesty, and courage,

at last prevailed, and it was decided that she should be allowed to lead the army to Orleans.

A suit of white armour, inlaid with silver, was made for her. She would not accept a sword. She told the Dauphin to send to a certain church. "In a tomb, behind the altar you will find a sword," she said. "You must bring it to me, for that is the sword that I will use, and no other."

The sword was found and cleaned. A scabbard of crimson velvet, embroidered with golden lilies, was made for it. Joan accepted the beautiful scabbard, but ordered that a plain strong leather one should be made as well. Then they gave her a banner of white linen, embroidered in purple with the lilies of France. Henceforward, wherever Joan went, she carried this banner in her right hand. "Though I have a sword," she said, "I do not wish to use it ; and I will kill no man."

She kept her word. During the months that followed she was in many a fierce battle. And although she led her men into the thickest of the fight, she never actually fought herself.

III.—THE MAID OF ORLEANS.

At the head of two hundred lances Joan of Arc rode to the relief of Orleans. On her march, crowds clustered round her horse, anxious to see her, to touch her fingers, to hear her voice. A little page who saw her at this time wrote to his mother: "She was all in white armour, except for her head, with a little axe in her hand, and mounted on a huge black charger."

Already she had made her influence felt among the

war-hardened men-at-arms who formed her army. She moved fearlessly among them. At her word the rough soldiers gave up their habit of using foul oaths, and became better men. The doer of an unworthy action shrank back ashamed when he met the pure glance of her eyes.

The Captain of the French soldiers in Orleans came out to meet her. "I bring you," she told him, "the best aid ever given to man—the aid of the King of Heaven." The English made no attempt to stop her, but watched in amazement as she entered the town.

Within Orleans the townspeople met her with cheers. The streets were lined on either side with the shouting masses, as, escorted by her soldiers, upright on her black charger, with her great white banner waving over her head, Joan rode among them, bringing new heart and new courage. They made a great feast for her, but the maid would eat nothing but a little bread.

The next day she sent a herald with a message to the English Captain, bidding him abandon the siege. The message was received with jeers and laughter.

"Go back to your cows," shouted the English soldiers, as they saw the figure of the Maid on the walls of Orleans; and they called her foul names that made the poor girl weep bitter tears. It was at moments like these that she showed she was still the simple peasant maid, unused to the sights and sounds of war.

The English had built strong forts outside the gates of Orleans, and against these forts Joan led her soldiers. They fought with renewed courage, following her flying banner into victory after victory. At last only the strongest of the forts was left untaken.



JOAN OF ARC AT ORLEANS.

(From the painting by Lenepvue. Neurdein, Photo.)

Then, for the first time, some of the French nobles hung back. The fort was too strong to be attacked, they said. It was far better to wait for the help which the Dauphin had promised to send. Many of the captains, too, were jealous of Joan's success, and were angry because they were compelled to follow a girl.

Joan said that she would not touch meat or drink until the fort was taken. The captains put all the difficulties they could in her way, but her courage and simple faith carried her through in triumph.

Fiercely the French assaulted the fort. Joan fell with an arrow deep in her breast, but still continued to cheer her men on. Before the fury of the French the English soldiers gave way, and at last Orleans was free.

From Orleans Joan marched to meet the Dauphin. As yet only a part of her mission was fulfilled. Her voices had told her that she should lead the Prince to be crowned King of France, and she was eager to complete her task.

The English retreated before the advance of the French army, and fell back on Paris. News of the Maid's deeds had flown all over France. As she rode from Orleans crowds of men came flocking to her banner. That simple figure at the head of the troops inspired the men with a courage they had never felt before. "And before she came, two hundred English would drive five hundred Frenchmen before them in a bicker; but, after her coming, two hundred Frenchmen would drive four hundred Englishmen before them; and the courage of the Frenchmen increased mightily."

At length the army reached the gates of Rheims, and soon afterwards the Dauphin was crowned Charles VII. of France. The Maid watched the ceremony with tears of joy in her eyes, for she had attained her heart's desire. She had insisted upon bringing her banner into the church, although several of the priests objected. "It has ever been to the front in the hour of trial and danger," she said; "now let me bear it in the hour of honour."

When the ceremony was finished, Joan knelt at the King's feet.

"O gentle King, the pleasure of God is fulfilled," she said. "Now let me go and keep sheep once more with my brothers and sisters; they would be so glad to see me again."

But the King would not allow her to leave him. Now that she had done all that she had promised, the heart of this fickle, worthless King went out to her. Flushed with his triumph, he pressed her to stay, promising her rich rewards. The only reward she would accept was the freedom from taxation of the people in her little village of Domremy.

With tears she begged the King and his nobles to allow her to return to her home. Her voices had told her that she should help the King, and lead him to be crowned. That done, she felt that her work was ended. And though she was persuaded to remain still at the head of the army, she did so unwillingly, for she was no longer sure that Divine guidance attended her plans.

IV.—THE TRIAL AND DEATH OF THE MAID.

It is possible that, had Joan had the whole-hearted support and aid of the King of France, she would have been able to complete her triumph. But she had not. The King was idle and shiftless, and led by his favourites. The nobles were jealous of Joan, and hesitated to help her.

Her first defeat took place before the walls of Paris, which city was held by the Burgundians, the allies of the English. Here, once again, Joan received a painful wound.

From that time forward, though she fought with her usual dash and bravery, disasters crowded upon her. Some months later, the town of Compiègne was besieged, and Joan led her men in a sally against the enemy.

In the press of the fight she became separated from the main body of her soldiers. Seeing her danger, a few faithful knights surrounded her, and prepared to cut their way back to the gates. Joan was on horse-back, and over her armour she wore a richly embroidered cloak of crimson velvet. A party of the enemy, seeing the brilliant figure in the midst of the little crowd of armed men, spurred to the attack, for they rightly guessed, by the brilliance of her dress, that she was the Maid of Orleans herself.

Joan's guards fought bravely, but one after another they were cut down. At last a soldier seized Joan by her cloak, and dragged her from her horse, and in spite of her struggles, she was taken prisoner.

Then, and not till then, the town bells rang for a

sally to rescue the Maid. But it was too late. Bound hand and foot, she was taken away, and, as a prisoner of war, she was sold to the Duke of Burgundy. In his turn he sold her to the English.

For a year she lingered in captivity. Once she nearly succeeded in escaping, having eluded her guards, but was discovered just as she was about to leave the prison. On another occasion she was locked up in a room at the top of a high tower, sixty feet from the ground. She made a rope by tying the sheets of her bed together, and let herself out through the narrow window. But the slender sheets gave way, and the girl fell to the ground, where she was found lying, bruised and fainting, but with no bones broken. After that the English chained her to a heavy log of wood, five feet long, by thin chains round her neck, her waist, her hands, and feet.

Several times her place of prison was changed, but at last she was taken to Rouen. They made an iron cage for her, and loaded her with chains. Night and day she was closely guarded.

English nobles came to stare at the country-girl who had overthrown the power of England. Many of them jeered at her and insulted her, but through all she was meek and gentle and long-suffering. Never for one moment did she doubt that the King whom she had helped would come in his own good time and deliver her. But Charles had forgotten all about her, and from her capture to the day of her death he never once lifted a finger to help her.

At last she was brought before a court composed of Bishops and Churchmen, and charged with witchcraft.

The girl at first appeared in court dressed in her fighting clothes, her wrists chained. But afterwards they gave her a long black robe, and she stood before them day after day, answering questions simply and truthfully.

The clever lawyers tried all they could to entrap her. She was questioned artfully, unfairly, so that she might make a slip and commit herself. But alone she stood there, facing her enemies, and some of those present in the court thought they saw the light of heaven shining in her pale face and deep, dark eyes.

Day after day they brought the weary girl back to be questioned anew. They told her that, since she had been captured, it was a proof that God had forsaken her.

"Since God has allowed me to be taken," she answered, "it is for the best. His will be done."

They had noticed that, whenever she fought, she carried her banner in her hand. They said that it must be an enchanted banner.

Joan replied : "I love my banner forty times better than my sword. I carried it so that I should not use my sword, for I wished to kill no man."

They asked her how it was that her men had fought with such bravery when she led them—what magic arts did she use ?

She answered : "I said to my men, 'Go in boldly among the English,' *and I went myself.*"

On another occasion, when lawyers and priests were all clamouring at her, confusing her with a number of questions, she was forced to say : "I pray you, gentlemen, speak one at a time !"

But at last, in spite of her innocence, she was doomed to die by the most painful of deaths—to be burnt at the stake.

They took her to the market-place of Rouen, where they had erected two scaffolds. On one the Bishop stood and preached at her ; on the other was set the stake at which she was to die.

Amidst the awed silence of the great crowd the girl walked to her death. At first she had given way to tears, but now she was quite calm. She asked for a cross, and a rough man-at-arms broke his staff across his knees, and, binding the two pieces together, handed the rough cross to her. She clasped it to her breast. “Can you not bring me the cross from the church?” she said.

They sent for it, and she asked that it might be held before her eyes until the last moment.

The pile was lighted. Joan bade the good priest who held the cross stand back, that the flames might not burn his robe. “My voices have not lied,” they heard her say in her last agony. And then, with one last cry of “Jesus!” her brave spirit passed. She was only nineteen when she died.

The English killed her, but the French betrayed her. Charles VII., the worthless King to whom she had given his throne, abandoned her in her hour of need. The English killed her ; and the memory of the deed is a lasting blot on the history of our country.

Though Joan was dead, her example roused the national spirit of France. Other hands carried on her work. The English were driven from town after town,

until, twenty-two years after the death of the Maid, the English had no possessions in France save the town of Calais.

The Hundred Years' War was ended. As a reward for all the lives that had been lost and all the money that had been spent, England had a single port on the coasts of France. Thus it was that "a country-girl overthrew the power of England."

WILLIAM CAXTON.

I.—THE MERCER.

WILLIAM CAXTON, the first English printer, was born in 1412, when Henry V. was King of England. The Weald of Kent, in which he lived as a boy, is now a rich, fertile country, crossed by good roads and lines of railway. In Caxton's time it was a wild and unsettled district, over which were scattered a few lonely farms.

Caxton's father was a farmer in this wild district, and he probably owned the lands he cultivated. At any rate, he was fairly well off, for he was able to send his boy to school, and afterwards, as we shall see, to apprentice him to a mercer.

We do not know what school William Caxton attended, but he paid attention to the lessons he received there, and in after-life was very grateful to his parents for having given him a good education.

When Caxton was fourteen or fifteen years old his father sent him to London, to be apprenticed to a mercer. His master was Robert Large, one of the leading merchants of London, who afterwards became Lord Mayor of the City.

It is very likely that, as a mercer's apprentice, Caxton would often have the opportunity of seeing

books. The mercers, in those days, were the great wool-dealers of England. They had their agents in large foreign towns such as Bruges, and they owned ships which traded with foreign countries.

Very often these ships would bring home from abroad rare manuscripts, which the mercers could sell at a good profit. For there was no special trade in book-selling in those days. Caxton tells us that one of the books which he afterwards printed, "The Book of Good Manners," was given to him by a friend who was a mercer.

But books were very dear, and only rich people could afford to buy them, so that it is not likely that Caxton had any of his own. He would, however, know some of the stories told by English poets such as Chaucer, because these were often told or sung by the minstrels who wandered about the country.

Caxton always loved Chaucer above all other poets. "His work," he says, "is craftily made, and worthy to be written and known; for he toucheth in it right great wisdom and subtle understanding; and so in all his works he excelleth in mine opinion all other writers in our English." Afterwards Caxton printed Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales," and so brought them within reach of a greater number of the people.

When Caxton's master died, he left his servant twenty marks, a sum equal in amount to about one hundred and fifty pounds of our money. After the death of Robert Large, Caxton went abroad, and lived for the next thirty years in Flanders, at the city of Bruges.

Here he became head of the company of English merchants living in the city. He was called Governor

of the English Nation in the Low Countries, and held a very responsible position. He had to make rules for the carrying on of trade, and see that those rules were kept. When any disputes or quarrels arose, they were referred to him for settlement, and his decision was final. He appointed men to pack the bales of goods, for merchants were not allowed to pack their goods themselves, lest they should be tempted into unfair dealing.

Even in this busy life Caxton still found time to take an interest in books. He read a great many, and set to work to copy some of them by hand, so that others might have the opportunity of reading them. The beauty of his work brought him to the notice of the Duchess of Burgundy, who pressed him to enter her service.

Caxton willingly accepted the change of life offered to him, for he saw that he would have more leisure to employ himself in writing and study. We are not quite certain what the duties of his new position were, but in all probability he was employed as a copyist. In that case his work would be to make copies of books for the library of his mistress. Previous to the invention of printing the only way to make a copy of a book was to write it out by hand. Many rich people who loved books employed copyists especially for this work.

In his new position Caxton had plenty of time to spare, and was able to devote a considerable amount of time to reading. He loved best to read of knightly deeds and of the doings of the heroes of old. One book pleased him so much that he determined to translate

it into English, so that his own countrymen might share his pleasure.

“Having no great charge or occupation,” he says, “I took a French book, and read therein many strange marvellous histories, wherein I had great pleasure and delight. And, for so much as this book was new, and late made, and drawn into French, and had never been seen in our English tongue, I thought in myself it should be a good business to translate it into our English, so that it might be had as well in the realm of England as in other lands. And thus I concluded in myself to begin ; and forthwith took pen and ink, and began boldly on this present work.”

But after he had spent some time on this task Caxton became discouraged, and put the work aside for awhile. Two years later he showed what he had already written to the Duchess of Burgundy, who immediately commanded him to go on with the work. He did so, and, in time, finished the translation.

Caxton had promised several of his friends that they should have copies of the translation, but he found that it was quite impossible for him to produce them by hand. “My pen is worn,” he says, “mine hand weary and not steadfast, mine eyes dimmed with much looking on the white paper”—for, at the time this translation was made, Caxton was already over fifty years old.

In order to overcome these difficulties, and produce many copies of his book, Caxton determined to learn the new art of printing, which had already created so much attention in Germany.

II.—THE NEW ART.

Let us now glance for a moment at the history of this wonderful invention, which was to change the face of the world.

For a very long time men had been trying to discover some quick and cheap way by which books could be copied. As we know, at first manuscripts were copied by hand. In almost every abbey there was a "scriptorium"—that is, a room in which the monks worked at writing and copying books. If you go to the British Museum, you may see many specimens of the work of these monks, and very beautiful work it is, too. But producing books by hand was always a slow and costly process.

The next step towards the invention of printing was the discovery that prints could be made from a carved wooden block. The method was to take a piece of hard wood and carve upon it the figure it was desired to copy. The engraved surface was then covered with ink, and prints were taken from the blocks by friction. Playing-cards and rough pictures were often printed in this way.

At last a clever man saw that if a large picture could be produced by this means, a small letter could be. This man's name was Lawrence Coster. He carved all the letters of the alphabet in pieces of hard wood, and so made wooden types. Then he inked these types, and pressed them one by one on to a sheet of parchment. You will easily see that this also was a very slow process.

Other men printed words by carving the writing on

to a wood block. But with these blocks nothing else could be printed, for, of course, the order of the letters could not be changed.

Then a German, named John Gutenberg, went a step farther still. Aided by his friends John Fust and Peter Schœffer, he hit upon the plan of *casting* his type. First of all, he carved the shape of the letter in hard wood or metal. From this he made a mould, from which he was able to cast as many of the letters as he wished, for the mould, once made, could be used again and again.

The types were then strung together on wires. Letters were placed side by side to make words. Words were separated from each other by small wedges. The sentences thus set up were put into wooden frames the size of the page of print required. These frames were clamped tightly, so that none of the type should drop out.

After a time the “composing stick” came into use. This was a piece of wood, containing a groove, to hold a line of type. The “compositor” held the stick in one hand, and set the type with the other. When the line was complete, it was transferred to the “chase,” or frame.

The first press was a very simple affair indeed. It was just an ordinary wooden screw press, with an arrangement by which the frame containing the types could be moved backward and forward to be inked.

The picture on p. 125 will show you what this press was like. In the centre of the picture the man who is working the press is shown. One sheet has just been printed, and a boy is very carefully taking it off the

frame. Behind the press stands a man with the ink-ing-balls, or "dabbers." They were made of sheep-skin stuffed with wool. At the right of the picture you may see the "compositor" with his "composing stick" in his hand. He sits before a case containing a number of little boxes. Each of these boxes is set apart for types of the same sign. In front of the compositor is the book from which he is copying.

The first printers did not make very much profit out of their discovery. The men who got their living by copying books by hand thought that their trade was ruined. And although books could be printed in large quantities at a cheap rate, the first expense was very large. Many copies of the book had to be sold before the printer was paid for his trouble.

Printing was introduced into Bruges by Colard Mansion. To him Caxton went to learn the new art, and, after much trouble and expense, he learnt enough to enable him to print his own book.

Caxton probably bought his type from other printers. But in those early days a printer had to make almost everything he needed himself. He had to learn to make the ink, and the "dabbers" with which it was applied to the type.

Even when all the pages of the book were printed, the printer had something more to do before he could give his work to the world. He had to be his own bookbinder, his own publisher, and his own book-seller.

The binding of books was often a very long process. The covers were made of wood, sometimes as thick as the panel of a door. The wood was covered with

leather, often beautifully ornamented and tooled. Very large books were provided with metal corners and clasps. Books bound in this way were strong enough to last for centuries, but they were very heavy. "That book is so heavy," said a writer once of one of these great volumes, "that no man can carry it about, much less get it into his head."

When the book was printed and bound, the printer had to sell it. If he printed a book which the public did not want, he was, of course put to a great loss. Caxton himself was always a very good business man. He would not set out to print a book unless he thought that he was likely to sell a reasonable number of copies.

About the year 1475 William Caxton made up his mind to come to England and set up his printing-press in this country. Accordingly, after an absence of over thirty years, he returned to his native land, bringing with him his presses and his types—a cargo more valuable than a shipful of gold.

III.—THE PRESS AT WESTMINSTER.

Caxton set up his printing-press in one of the side chapels of Westminster Abbey. Outside the door of his office he hung his sign, the "Red Pale"—a shield with a broad bar of red running across it. Underneath the shield was a printed advertisement, inviting all men who wished to buy well-printed books to come into the shop, and they should have them "good and chepe." He also printed and distributed handbills, giving notice of his forthcoming books.

The English people took a great interest in the new art, which had been brought among them. Numbers visited Caxton's shop to see the various processes for themselves. The King of England at that time was Edward IV., and he, too, visited the Press at Westminster, and spent some time watching Caxton's men at work.

Some of the rich English nobles helped the printer by giving him orders for books. The Queen's brother, Lord Rivers, a wise and learned nobleman, himself translated a book, called "The Sayings of the Philosophers," which was one of the first books ever printed in England.

But there were not wanting many people who were not at all pleased with the changes brought about by the new invention. Some scholars even complained that learning was disgraced, because, by means of printed books, it was brought within reach of the common people.

Caxton, however, took no heed of these grumblers. He continued to print, and sold his books as cheaply as he could afford. But he would never produce poor work. As he says himself, in one of the last books he printed, "What a man maketh or doeth, if the thing be good and well made, it must needs come to good end."

During the twenty years (from 1471 to 1491) that Caxton practised as a printer, about sixty-four books were issued from his Press. The first book printed in the English language was "The Histories of Troy." This was the work which Caxton was translating when he made up his mind to learn the art of printing. The first book printed in England was called "The Game

and Play of Chess.” This also was translated from the French by Caxton himself.

Caxton’s work as a writer is scarcely less important than his work as a printer, for it has had much influence upon the form of our English language.

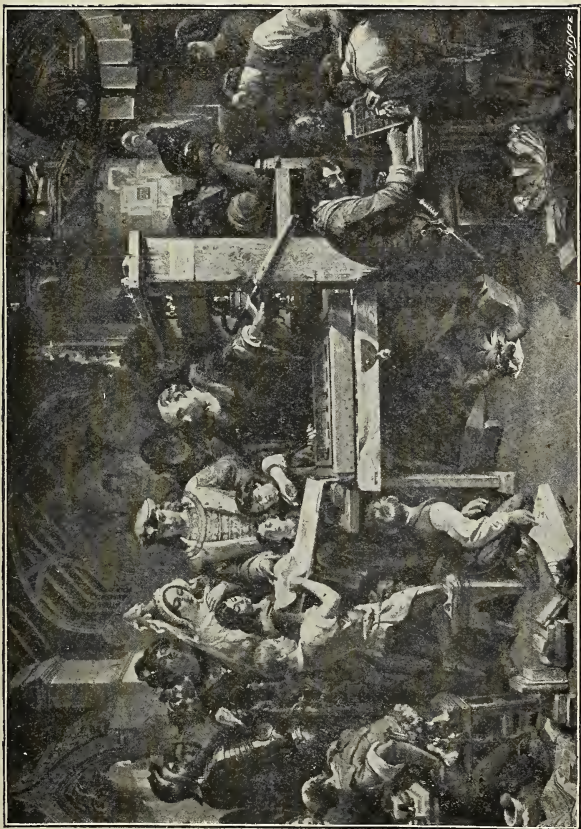
Not very long before the time that Caxton was born, the English language had not been taught in schools. French was the tongue spoken by the King, the Court, and the rich people a century before. Laws were written in French. French was spoken at the law courts. Books were written either in French or Latin.

Gradually, however, a change had come about. English poets arose who told stories and wrote verses in their native tongue. The chief of these was Geoffrey Chaucer, whose life you have already read.

But neither the spelling nor the pronunciation of English was the same in all parts of the country. When a writer became tired of spelling a word in one way he spelt it in another way for a change. A man from the north of England could sometimes scarcely understand a man from the south.

At the time when Caxton went to school, schoolmasters had not long begun to teach in English. There was some grumbling about the change. One man wrote : “ The pupils have advantage in one way—that they learn their grammar sooner ; and in another way they have disadvantage, for now they learn no French, and that is hurt for them that shall pass across the sea.”

When Caxton came to the work of translating books from the French, he had some difficulty in knowing how best to choose words so that all could understand



CAXTON SHOWING HIS FIRST SPECIMEN TO EDWARD IV.

(D. MacIise, R.A. By permission of Messrs. H. Graves & Co., Ltd.)

him. If he wrote English as it was used in Yorkshire it would not be understood by those who lived in Kent.

He himself tells an amusing story to illustrate the differences in the speech of people from different parts of England.

He tells us that some merchants were once sailing down the Thames. On their way the wind failed, and being unable to proceed the merchants went ashore. Once on land they called at an inn to refresh themselves, and one of them asked the landlady if she would let him have some eggs.

"I cannot speak French," answered the good wife.

Then the merchant was angry, for he also could not speak French. He had asked for *eggs* in good English, and the woman had not understood him.

But one of the other merchants soon put the matter right. He told the landlady that his companion wished to have *eyren*, and this word the woman understood well enough.

"So," says Caxton, at the end of this story, "what should a man in these days now write, *eggs* or *eyren*? Certainly it is hard to please every man, because of the diversity and change of language."

After much careful thought Caxton decided to write his books in the form of English spoken by the people of the Midlands. When books were produced in greater numbers the form of English became uniform throughout the country. So that to-day a Yorkshireman speaks the same English as a Londoner, although there is a little difference in pronunciation.

Caxton did all his work with the most loving care and thoroughness. When he first printed Chaucer's

"Canterbury Tales," a gentleman who had bought a copy came to him and said that there were many mistakes in the book.

"I answered," says Caxton, "that I had made it according to my copy, and by me was nothing added or taken away."

The gentleman pointed out that copies of books written by hand very often contained mistakes, and offered to lend Caxton a true copy of the work if he would print the book again. Caxton immediately agreed.

This double printing must have been a considerable loss to Caxton, but he preferred to lose money rather than to produce faulty work.

In 1491 the long and well-spent life was drawing to a close, for Caxton was nearly eighty years old. He worked to the end, printing and translating, and was working when his last call came. One of his very last books was "The Art and Craft to Know Well to Die."

One day in 1491 the doors of the workshop in Westminster were not opened as usual. "The setting sun shone brightly into the chamber, and lighted up such furniture as no other room in London could then show. Between the columns which supported the roof stood two presses—ponderous machines. A *forme* of types lay unread upon the table of one of these presses; the other was empty. There were *cases* ranged between the columns, but there was no *copy* suspended ready for the compositors to proceed with in the morning. No heap of wet paper was piled upon the floor. The *balls*, removed from the presses, were

rotting in a corner. The *ink-blocks* were dusty, and a thin film had formed over the oily pigment. He who had set these machines in motion and filled the whole space with the activity of mind, was dead. His daily work was ended."

But others carried on the work that he had begun. His assistants, Wynken de Worde and Richard Pynson, still continued to print books, and in after time set up famous presses of their own.

Could Caxton have looked forward into the future he might well have been satisfied with the results of his work.

At the present time hundreds of thousands of books are produced every year. Free libraries are found in almost every town. Before Caxton's day, only rich nobles could afford to have books of their own, but to-day the poorest cottager need not be without them.

The noble thoughts of a great writer, by means of books, are spread all over the world. A poet sings, not to a few hundred people, but to millions. And, by means of books, education has been brought within the reach of all.



THE SPANISH ARMADA.

(From the drawing by R. Caton Woodville.)

SIR FRANCIS DRAKE.

I.—EARLY VOYAGES.

THIS is the life-story of one of those famous sea-captains of Queen Elizabeth's reign—men whose efforts rendered England's prosperity possible; men who guarded England's shores with the same courage with which they explored distant waters; men who gave England the right to bear the proud title of the Mistress of the Seas.

Francis Drake was born at Tavistock, in Devon, somewhere about the year 1540. His father, Edmund Drake, had probably been a sailor in his youth, but he afterwards became a clergyman, acting as lay chaplain to Henry VIII.'s fleet at Chatham. Drake was himself sent to sea at a very early age, and had made several voyages to distant lands before he was twenty years old.

He seems to have gained the love of the master to whom he was an apprentice, for, when the former died, he left Drake a ship, in which the lad afterwards made a voyage to Guinea, on the west coast of Africa. In the year 1565 Drake ventured his all in a voyage to the West Indies. As soon as he arrived there; his cargo was confiscated by the Spaniards, and he returned, vowing that one day he would be revenged.

At this time it was less than a hundred years since the voyages of Columbus had opened out a New World.

Daring Spanish mariners had already conquered Mexico, Peru, and parts of the West Indian Islands. Spanish colonies grew up on American soil. Already in Spanish cities stately buildings reared white domes and columns to the sky. Galleons sailed the Pacific laden with the gold and jewels brought from those distant, rich possessions of Spain.

Marvellous tales were told of the wealth of those far-distant countries. Travellers spoke of Spanish ships, great high-pooped floating castles, carrying bars of silver as ballast, with gold in ingots stored amidships, and great chests of diamonds, emeralds, and rubies. The imagination of Europe was on fire.

At that time Spain was the greatest naval power in the world. Her ships were on every known sea. Her sailors were intrepid in war, first in exploration, first in commerce. England, properly speaking, had no navy at all. Henry VIII. had begun to build one, but in the early years of the reign of Queen Elizabeth the warships were rotting in the dockyards.

In all the harbours of the coast, however, were trim, taut, privately-owned vessels, well built for war or voyaging into distant seas. What the Government did not do private enterprise carried forward. The power of Spain had already become a menace. It was these ships that broke that power, and afterwards chased the mighty vessels of Spain up Channel, to be wrecked one by one on the rocky coasts of Scotland and Ireland.

Although England and Spain were not actually at war, a great feeling of hostility existed between the two countries. The name of Spaniard was a name of hate. Tales were told of Englishmen who had been captured by the Holy Inquisition, and thrown to die in Spanish dungeons, or tortured in Spanish prisons, or even burnt at the stake.

Private owners fitted out ships to fight the Spaniards. Queen Elizabeth openly disapproved of this "privateering," but secretly encouraged it. Spain stood for terror and tyranny. Freed from the persecutors of Mary, Englishmen trembled lest a Spanish success should bring back the dark days, and light once again the fires that had burned at Smithfield.

Drake, in common with many of his fellows, dreamed of the magic land far away, and of the wealth to be gained there. For a time he stuck to coast-trading, and prospered. Then, in 1567, hearing that his near relation, John Hawkins, was about to venture a voyage to the New World, he made up his mind to join him. He sold his bark, bought a faster vessel with the money, manned her with a stout crew, and set out with the expedition.

John Hawkins had just discovered a new method of making money. This was no less than selling slaves to the planters of the West Indies, who were eager for labour to cultivate their lands. Hawkins' plan was to sail with his five ships to the coasts of Africa, to land and capture negroes there, and then to trade his living cargo in West Indian and American ports.

The Spaniards objected to an Englishman selling slaves, not because they thought that the practice was

wrong, but because they claimed the right of controlling it themselves. They issued orders that Hawkins was not to be allowed to land his negroes. But the planters were only too willing to buy. Hawkins and Drake sold their cargo at a large profit, and then, with their bullion on board, steered for home.

A storm drove them out of their course, and they were forced to take their badly-battered squadron into a South Mexican port, where they might survey and make good the damage. A Spanish fleet had been sent in pursuit, and as the English squadron lay in harbour, these vessels came up. A fight took place. Three of the five English ships were sunk. Hawkins and Drake, each on his own ship, managed to escape ; but they returned to London ruined men.

Drake determined to be revenged on the Spaniards, and to recover from them the wealth he had lost. Quietly he made his preparations, so that no word of his intentions should get abroad. He did not mean to let the Spaniards into his secret until he was obliged. Friends came forward eagerly with money, and in 1572 he was once more able to set out.

This time he was accompanied by his brother, John Drake. The expedition sailed in two small vessels, with seventy-three men and provisions for a year. Drake had already formed his plans, though he told nobody exactly what they were. He had found out that the gold and silver brought by the Spaniards from the mines of Peru were taken to Panama. There the bars were placed on the backs of mules and carried across the isthmus to Nombre-de-Dios, to be reshipped for Spain. The land journey was necessary to save

a long voyage round the Horn, as you will see if you look at the map.

Drake's plan was to land on the Isthmus of Panama, wait for the treasure-bearing mule-train, and carry the gold and silver to his ships. He relied upon the unexpectedness of his attack to keep him in safety.

Everything was carried out almost exactly as he planned it. He landed at Nombre-de-Dios, and saw treasure there in plenty. But he dared not carry it away, for his men were too few, and he would thereby have endangered the success of his scheme. A runaway slave offered to guide him through the woods to a spot where he could safely wait for the treasure-train.

Through the dense undergrowth of the tropical forest the guide led the little party. Overhead the tall trees shut out the light of the sun. The great trailing creepers, some of them brilliant with blossom, hung in festoons from branch to branch. The men had often to hack their way with their knives.

Drake climbed a tree to ascertain whether there were any signs of his object. From his high position he could see the mass of thick green undergrowth below him stretching away in either direction. In the distance was the sparkle of the sea—a great level plain of blue water, calm and peaceful—the Pacific. For a long time Drake remained gazing, and before he came down he had made up his mind that one day he would sail a ship in those waters.

At last the adventurers heard the noise of the approaching mule-train, the tinkling of the bells, the calls of the muleteers, the clattering of hoofs. As the convoy came abreast of them the Englishmen leapt out

upon it. Taken by surprise, the drivers fled, leaving the enormous treasure, the yield of many months' labour at the mines, in Drake's hands. There were bars of silver and bars of gold, and cases of emeralds, pearls, diamonds, and rubies. Drake buried the silver on the spot, because it was too heavy to carry, but the gold and jewels were taken to the ship.

No accident marred the voyage home. In the month of August, 1573, Drake put into Plymouth, having been absent nearly fourteen months. It was a Sunday morning, and as the news of his return spread over the town, the people came rushing out of the church to the quay-side, leaving the preachers to speak to empty seats. They flocked in crowds to see him as he stepped ashore, and many whispers passed round of the wonderful wealth he had brought back with him from the El Dorado* across the seas.

II.—THE VOYAGE ROUND THE WORLD.

With the wealth obtained from his expedition to Nombre-de-Dios Drake fitted out a squadron and prepared for another voyage to the New World. He had not forgotten his vow to sail a vessel in the Pacific, and his plan was to enter that ocean by a way no Englishman had ever gone before—through the Straits of Magellan.

With some difficulty he succeeded in obtaining a commission from Queen Elizabeth for his voyage, and in order to throw the Spaniards off the scent, he gave

* A Spanish word, meaning "the Land of Gold."

out that he was bound for Alexandria. The Spaniards were not deceived. They knew very well where he was going, and shrewdly suspected what he was going to do. They gave orders that no English ship should be allowed in Spanish waters on either side of the Isthmus of Panama, and threatened, if a ship were found there, to sink her, and hang every man of her crew.

On November 15, 1577, Drake set sail from Plymouth. He had with him five vessels, of which the largest was not much bigger than a modern coasting schooner. He himself commanded his own ship, the *Pelican*, afterwards named the *Golden Hind*. The *Elizabeth*, commanded by Captain John Winter, two frigates of thirty and fifty tons, and a small pinnace, completed the squadron.

The beginning of the voyage proved unlucky, for no sooner were the ships at sea than a terrible storm arose. The mast of the *Pelican* was damaged, and one or two of the other ships battered, so that Drake was forced to put into Falmouth to repair.

On December 13 Drake put out to sea again, and this time proceeded without mishap. Sailing almost due south, he reached the Cape Verde Islands, where he took in fresh provisions. From there he made his way across the Atlantic, and after fifty-six days' sailing, arrived at the coast of Brazil. Following this coast, he entered the estuary of La Plata, where he filled his casks with fresh water.

So far, beyond an encounter with small Spanish vessels off the coast of Africa, the voyage had been peaceful enough. But now Drake found that he had a traitor with him. This man was a Mr. Doughty.

We do not know exactly what his position was in the fleet, but it is likely that he was in the pay of the Spanish Government. Once or twice he had attempted to desert with his vessel, and was constantly at work among the men trying to persuade them to mutiny. The matter was serious, for one traitor might endanger the lives of the whole party.

Still hugging the South American coast, Drake sailed southward to the harbour of Port St. Julian in Patagonia, used by Magellan half a century before. The coast was quite bare and desolate, except for the flocks of sea-birds that flew screaming over the rocks. As the ship entered the harbour the sailors saw a high gibbet, from which a skeleton still hung. It was the body of one of Magellan's crew who had been hanged for mutiny. The same spot was chosen for Doughty's punishment.

He was brought forward and tried before forty of the ship's company, who found him guilty and condemned him to death. The unfortunate man was quite resigned to his fate and repentant of his fault. He took leave of the ship's company, received the Holy Communion with Drake himself, and, with "a prayer for the Queen's majesty and realm, in quiet sort laid his head to the block, where he ended his life." It is said that Drake himself acted as executioner. Such was the stern justice of the man.

For six weeks the ships remained at Port St. Julian. The squadron was now reduced to three ships, for two of the smaller vessels had been so badly damaged that they were destroyed. With these three Drake entered the Straits of Magellan.

The passage through the straits was a most difficult

one. They had no charts. Good harbours were plenty, but the water was so deep that the ships could not be anchored. Moreover, fierce squalls blew in sudden gusts, changing direction constantly. On either side the straits were lined by precipitous cliffs and rocky heights, their sides clothed in snow and ice, their tops covered with cloud. The crew "found a great store of fowl which could not fly, of the bigness of geese"—penguins—and killed great numbers of them.

At last the perilous passage was achieved, and Drake burst into the Pacific to meet the great West Wind Drift, which swept him out of his course, south and eastward of the islands of Cape Horn. One of his ships had been wrecked in passing through the straits, and now the *Elizabeth* was separated from her companion vessel. Drake had arranged to meet at Valparaiso, in case of a separation, and thither he sailed. Captain Winter lingered for three weeks in the straits, and then set out for home, to the intense mortification of his crew. He arrived safely, and reported his companions lost.

In the meantime Drake made his way northward to Chili. An Indian, adrift in a canoe, whom he picked up, gave him news of a great Spanish galleon which was ready to sail from Valparaiso. Thither Drake hurried. As he sailed up, the crew of the galleon, mistaking him for a Spaniard, welcomed him with beat of drum. The English sailors leapt aboard. The Spanish sailors leapt into the sea. The prize was examined and much gold found in her, which was transferred to the *Pelican's* hold.

Still he sailed northward. At Coquimbo the in-

habitants had been warned of his coming, and were prepared. A battle took place, in which one Englishman was killed. This was the first life lost by actual warfare. Landing at Tarapaca, the English sailors found the Spanish bearers lying asleep on the beach with bars of silver by their side. They took the silver ; they left the men. At Arica they found three small vessels, from one of which they took fifty-seven bars of silver, "each bar being in shape and size like a brickbat, and weighing about twenty pounds."

Northward still the little English vessel sailed, towards Calao, the Port of Lima, where the produce of the mines of Peru was shipped to Spain. In the harbour of Calao twelve ships were moored. The boats were unguarded. Their crews were drinking ashore. Drake found their cargoes poor enough—a few bales of silk and a little money. He cut their cables and set them adrift. But he learnt that the *Cacafuego*, a large galleon, had just set sail for the Isthmus of Panama laden with gold and jewels, the season's produce of the mines. This was news indeed. Drake promised the gold chain from his neck to the first man who sighted the galleon. The prize fell to his brother, who first pointed out the peculiar square sails of the Spanish ship on the horizon. The *Pelican* sailed towards the great vessel and fired three shots. The first went wide, the second brought down the mizzen-mast, and at the third the galleon surrendered. A prize crew was put on board, and the cargo examined. The value of the capture was enormous. The *Cacafuego* carried twenty-six tons of silver as ballast, and a great store of gold and precious stones besides.

Drake was now fairly well satisfied with himself, and began to think about getting home. He dared not return the way he had come, for he knew that the Straits of Magellan were guarded, and that Spanish fleets were on the watch for him. He might return by the Cape of Good Hope, but he cherished the idea of sailing northward, and returning to England by way of the frozen seas and the North Cape. With this idea he sailed along the American coast.

Landing at Guatalca for fresh water, he proceeded to the court-house, where he found the Spanish judge trying a batch of negroes. The judge and his men were taken prisoners, and held as hostages while the water-casks were filled. Then they were set free again.

At San Francisco Drake beached the *Pelican*, overhauled her thoroughly, strengthened her spars and rigging, and scraped the weed and shell from her hull. Many miles of sea lay between him and home.

Then he changed his course, sailing eastward towards the Moluccas and Celebes, taking an occasional Spanish vessel on his way. At Celebes the ship was once more overhauled, and the crew given a rest. They wandered among the forests of the island. And “amongst the trees by night through the whole land an infinite swarm of fiery worms did show themselves, flying through the air, whose bodies, being no bigger than our common English flies, make such a show and light as if every twig or tree had been a burning candle.”

From the natives of these islands of the Malay Archipelago Drake and his men received the greatest kindness. They came to meet him, bringing gifts of rice,



QUEEN ELIZABETH KNIGHTING DRAKE.

(By Sir John Gilbert, R. A.)

sugar-cane, fowls, and sago. The King of the country came in state. "A rich umbrella or parasol all embroidered in gold was borne before him. He was dressed after the fashion of his country, but with extreme magnificence, for he was enveloped from the shoulders with a long mantle of cloth of gold reaching to the ground. He wore as an ornament upon the head a kind of turban made of the same stuff, all worked in fine gold and enriched with jewels and tufts. On his neck there hung a fine gold chain many times doubled and formed of broad links. On his fingers he had six rings of very valuable stones, and his feet were encased in shoes of morocco leather."

Hearing that a Spanish fleet was at anchor near by, Drake hastily put to sea, and sailed through the Straits of Sunda into the Indian Ocean. Then, doubling the Cape of Good Hope, he sailed along the coast of Africa, touching for water at Sierra Leone, "where were elephants and abundance of oysters fastened on the branches of trees, hanging down into the water, where they grow and multiply."

The remainder of the voyage was uneventful, and, on September 26, 1580, Drake dropped anchor in Plymouth Harbour. He had been absent nearly three years. He had sailed round the globe. He had taken the first English ship into Pacific waters. He had made the name of Englishman feared on the Spanish Main. And he had brought home a King's ransom in his hold.

And now, what are we to think of this voyage of Drake's? It has been said that, because England and Spain were at peace, he was really a pirate. But he

was not quite so bad as that. For, although in *name* there was peace between the two countries, there was really the most bitter war between them. Even at the time of the coming of the great Armada no formal declaration of war had been made.

III.—THE SPANISH ARMADA.

The news of Drake's return spread from town to town in England. Poems and songs were made about him. The hero's name was in everybody's mouth.

But the Spaniards were furious. They demanded that this "Master Thief of the Unknown World," as they called him, should be punished and his treasure restored. For a short time Elizabeth affected to treat Drake coldly, and the *Pelican* remained in harbour, still with the booty in her hold.

As the Spanish demands became more pressing, Elizabeth threw off all pretence at coldness. The Spanish Ambassador threatened her that, if Drake were not punished, "matters would come to the cannon." She replied quietly, "in her most natural voice, as if she were telling a common story," that if threats like that were uttered, she would throw the speaker into a dungeon.

Five months after Drake's return Elizabeth proceeded to Deptford, where his ship was stationed, and conferred the honour of knighthood upon him. He was presented with £10,000 as a reward for his efforts. The rest of the enormous treasure was taken to the Tower, there to be stored up for future use.

King Philip of Spain had quite determined to invade

England and humble her pride for ever. As the leader of Catholic Europe, the whole of Europe looked to him to do it. Slowly and surely he began to collect in the Tagus a great fleet, the largest ever seen, destined for the invasion of England.

Elizabeth and the English people knew quite well what was being prepared for them. In 1585 Drake was allowed to take a fleet of twenty-five ships and sail to the Spanish Main once more. This time he went to make more open warfare than on the previous occasion. He plundered and burnt the cities of St. Jago, St. Domingo, and Carthagena, and returned home in triumph, though a little annoyed because he had just missed the Spanish gold fleet. The profits of the voyage, however, were still considerable.

Meanwhile the King of Spain steadily carried on his preparations for the great invasion. The sound of hammering was heard in foreign dockyards—at Lisbon, at Cadiz, at Naples, where the high galleons were being built. Soldiers were gathered together to man the ships and many thousand pieces of cannon cast.

Drake applied to Elizabeth for permission to sail to Spain to see what was going on. Elizabeth was anxious to preserve peace, and at first refused. But at last a half-hearted assent was wrung from her, and on board the *Bonaventura*, with a fleet of small vessels, he set out one April morning in 1587.

Favourable gales helped him on his course, and in a few days he came in sight of Cadiz. The harbour was full of ships—galleons, galleasses,* and caravels.†

* A large vessel, but smaller than a galleon.

† A small ship with broad, high bows.

Drake surveyed the forest of masts, and called his captains to a conference in his cabin. Queen Elizabeth had given him leave to do no more than examine the enemy's resources, but it seemed a pity to come so far and do so little. Drake decided to make a dash into Cadiz Harbour.

The entrance to the harbour was guarded by two batteries of heavy guns. As soon as the Spaniards made out Drake's intention, they began to fire. He took no heed, not even troubling to return the volley, but sped through the hail of shot clear into the midst of the Spanish shipping. The guardship at the mouth of the harbour was sunk. Such was the terror of Drake's name that very little resistance was made. The crews of the ships jumped overboard, and swam ashore to look for help. Very methodically, Drake stripped the ships of everything of value and set them on fire. Then, without the loss of a single man, he sailed out of the harbour again, having destroyed ten thousand tons of shipping prepared for the invasion of England. He himself called this exploit "singeing the King of Spain's beard."

Drake now sailed round to the Tagus, where fifty great galleons, the finest ships of the Spanish fleet, lay in harbour. He would have liked to repeat the performance of Cadiz, and in all probability, had he done so, would have been successful, for the ships were not strongly guarded. But he dare do no more without leave from Elizabeth, and this leave was refused, for the Queen still cherished the hope of keeping the peace.

For a week or two longer the daring sailor lingered in Spanish waters, and then he fell in with the *San Philip*,

a Spanish ship sailing from the Indies richly loaded with gold. She was taken, almost without a shot, and two months after he had set out Drake towed her into Plymouth port.

The coming of the Armada was delayed, but not prevented. Philip was resolute to conquer England, "though he sold the silver candlesticks from his table." Early in 1588 the damage had been repaired, and the great fleet sailed for England. There were 129 large ships of war, each crowded with men, their sides bristling with cannon.

England was prepared. Her navy consisted only of thirty-six ships, the largest of them not so great as the smallest of the Spanish galleons. But from every port privately-owned vessels put out, manned with stout fellows, ready to defend their shores.

The Armada came sweeping up the Channel in the form of a crescent. As it was sighted, the beacon-lights flared from headland to headland along the English coast, flashing the news from one end of the country to the other.

Drake himself was playing at bowls when a privateer captain rushed on to the green, panting and breathless. He had seen the Spanish ships of war in the Channel, a hundred and fifty sail, sweeping along in a broad crescent. Drake calmly bent again to his game. "There is time to finish the play and beat the Spaniards too," he said.

At Dunkirk the Prince of Parma was waiting with a large army, and a fleet of ships, barges, and flat-bottomed boats for the transport of troops. The Spanish commander had orders to avoid an action, to keep near the French shores, and to join Parma. But

instead of carrying out his orders, he steered across the Channel, with the vague idea of attacking Plymouth.

As his majestic crescent sailed past the port, the fast English clippers put out one by one between him and the shore. There were about fifty vessels altogether, of which about thirty were the Queen's ships, under the command of Lord Howard. Drake acted as Vice-Admiral of the fleet.

The Spanish sailors watched with surprise as they saw the ease with which the little English vessels beat to windward. The surprise was soon turned to dismay, for they found that the English ships could sail twice as fast as they could themselves, and fire four shots to their one.

As the great fleet floated up the Channel, the English ships followed after. The galleons were unwieldy, and could not be turned easily. The Spaniards were bad gunners; their shots flew high over the low hulls of the English vessels. On the other hand, every shot from an English cannon took effect, working fearful havoc on the crowded decks of the galleons.

Two large vessels surrendered to Drake at the beginning of the fight. Hour by hour the disorder among the galleons grew greater. The little English vessels dashed up close, pouring in deadly broadsides, and sailing quickly out of harm's way. Night and day for a week the running fight continued. Then the Armada anchored in Calais Roads, and the English ships hove-to, a mile away, to watch them.

Late that night the Spaniards saw black shadows of ships sailing silently down upon them. As the strange vessels drew near, they burst into flame from truck to waterline. They were eight old ships which Howard

and Drake had filled with pitch and set drifting toward the galleons.

A terrible panic broke out at sight of the fire-ships. The Spaniards cut their cables and fled aimlessly from the danger. One great galleon went ashore, and was taken, after a desperate fight.

When the dawn broke the Armada was broken into two parts, and Drake seized the opportunity to attack. Two-thirds of the Spanish fleet were drifting helplessly, unable to return because of the wind and tide. The remainder consisted of forty of the largest galleons, and against these Drake and Hawkins brought the English fleet. All day the battle raged. English ships closed round each great galleon, pouring volley after volley into its crowded decks with terrible effect. When night came the cannonade ceased, for lack of powder to continue it.

The English vessels still followed behind the drifting galleons, which were now in great distress. A storm came on. The Spaniards could not return the way they had come, for the English fleet was in sight, hull down on the horizon. They were forced to meet the gales of the northern seas, shot-shattered as they were, and trust to be able to return to Spain by rounding the Orkneys. Drake followed as far as the Firth of Forth, where he turned and left them.

And now the proud ships of the Invincible Armada dashed one by one on the rocky shores of Scotland. Their crews waded through the boiling surf only to be killed by the wild peasantry who waited on the shore for them. Some of the galleons escaped, only to be wrecked on the coast of Ireland. In one bay eleven hundred bodies were cast up on the beach.

Fifty-three ships out of the hundred and twenty-nine

crawled back, two months later, into Corunna. They were all that were left of the Great Armada that had threatened the liberties of England.

Drake made one more voyage to the Spanish Main in 1595. Sir John Hawkins, now an old man of seventy-five, accompanied him.

From the very beginning this voyage was a failure. Hawkins was taken ill while the fleet was crossing the Atlantic, and when the ships put into Porto Rico he died. Misfortune after misfortune followed, until even Drake's stout heart knew the meaning of despair. To make matters worse, he himself fell ill.

One bright morning in January, 1596, the friends who watched round the bed of their captain saw that his end was near. Drake himself declared that he felt better, and insisted on rising and going on deck. But the effort was too much for him, and he fell fainting to the ground. Tender hands lifted him and bore him to his couch, and an hour later he breathed his last. His body was buried at sea.

“ Drake he's in his hammock till the great Armadas come,
(Capten, art tha sleepin' there below ?)
Slung atween the round shot, listenin' for the drum,
An' dreamin' arl the time o' Plymouth Hoe.
Call him on the deep sea, call him up the Sound,
Call him when ye sail to meet the foe ;
Where the old trade's plyin' an' the old flag flyin',
They shall find him ware an' wakin', as they found him long
ago !”*

For, though Drake is dead, his spirit still lives in all Englishmen who love their country. And that spirit will awake should the need again arise.

* Henry Newbolt, “ Drake's Drum.”

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

I.—BOYHOOD.

THE history of the first thirty years of the reign of Queen Elizabeth is crowded with the figures of men of action. Sailors like Drake and Hawkins broke the power of Spain upon the seas ; soldiers like Sidney fought England's battles in foreign countries ; and statesmen like Burleigh and Walsingham controlled affairs at home.

After the defeat of the Spanish Armada the national prosperity increased to a wonderful extent. The nation was at peace, and secure. Industry, trade, and commerce grew. The people were lodged better, fed better, and lived happier lives. More than ever before England became "Merrie England"—"a nest of singing birds."

The discoveries of the explorers in distant lands had also a great effect upon the national life. The boundaries of the known world were enlarged. The imagination of the people was fired by stories of those strange countries of the West. They were fairylands where anything might happen. Men believed in mountains of gold and hills of emerald. Even a learned and well-educated man like Sir Walter Raleigh listened to tales of a strange, headless people, living deep

within the wilds of Guiana, with "eyes in their shoulders, and their mouths in the middle of their breasts, and a long train of hair growing backward between their shoulders"—tales which he earnestly and simply believed.

Education, too, had improved, and new grammar schools were rising in many parts of the country. More books were printed, and the writings of wise men studied, not only by the nobility, but by the common people.

It was during this great time, in the midst of the "age of new things," that William Shakespeare lived. He was born in 1564, in the beautiful little town of Stratford-on-Avon, in Warwickshire. The cottage in Henley Street which was his birthplace is still standing, and is visited by thousands of people every year.

Shakespeare's father was a well-to-do merchant in Stratford, a dealer in wool, leather, corn, and meat. He was at the time of his son's birth a very prosperous citizen, and he became Alderman, Treasurer, and Bailiff. Shakespeare's mother, Mary, came of a good Warwickshire family—the Ardens.

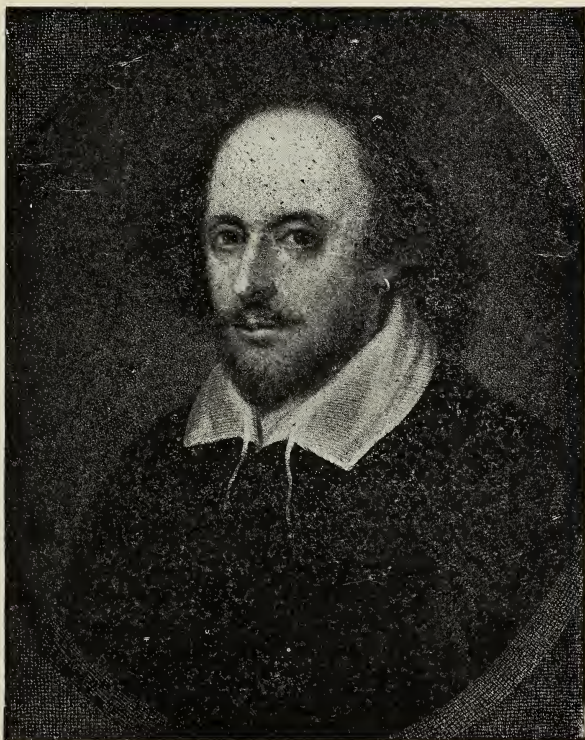
It is probable that Shakespeare received his early education at the Stratford Grammar School, which was then newly founded. There he learnt his Latin grammar, and stored up remembrances of his schoolmaster for future use. Perhaps the character of Sir Hugh Evans, in the "Merry Wives of Windsor," with his tags of Latin, is a portrait of one of the schoolmasters the lad knew.

It is also probable that the boy was not a very earnest

scholar. At a later time Ben Jonson said of him that he had "small Latin, and less Greek." But then, Jonson himself was a brilliant scholar above all things, and his standard of learning would surely be high. At any rate, the lad learned enough Latin at school to prove useful to him when he came to write his plays. His knowledge of Roman life, however, was obtained from a translation of Plutarch's "Lives of the Ancients."

We know little or nothing of the boyhood and early youth of the greatest of our English poets. We can only believe that Shakespeare was a high-spirited boy, fond of life in the open air, fond of a jest, good-humoured, happy, and healthy-minded. All this we feel that he must have been when we read his plays. No stay-at-home, moping dreamer could have known the woods so well as Shakespeare did. His best lessons were learnt, not in the schoolroom, or from the printed pages of books, but from the great book of Nature.

And so we must think of Shakespeare as just a happy English boy, with the light of fun shining from his grey eyes, and the healthy tan of sun and wind upon his cheek. Though, like the school-boy he has himself pictured for us, he might, with shining morning face and satchel, go creeping, like snail, unwillingly to school, yet he would know the songs of all the birds that sang in the pleasant Warwickshire woods. He would know their times and habits, and where to find their nests. The shy animals of the woodland would have no secrets for him. And it is certain that the glories of all the changing year were known to him—



WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

the tender green of the opening bud in spring-time, the ruddy hue of the falling leaf, the cloud-piled evening sky.

The lad was not allowed to remain very long at the grammar school, for his father's prosperity failed, and it was necessary that William should help him in the business. Aubrey, who wrote a life of the poet about 1680, tells us that John Shakespeare practised the trade of a butcher, and that for a short time William helped in the business. "I have been told," he says, "that when he killed a calf, he would do it in high style, and make a speech." Other people have said that at this time Shakespeare was sent to an attorney's office to study law; but the only reason for saying this is the wonderful knowledge of law terms displayed by the poet in his works. Still others say that he was himself a schoolmaster; and he has also been variously described as a hosier, a glover, and a wool-stapler. The one fact that is certain is that Shakespeare began to earn his own living at an early age. By this means his character probably gained in self-reliance and independence.

It is natural that we should seek among the circumstances of Shakespeare's youth for some influence which may have inspired his later choice of a profession. Such an influence is found easily enough in the visits to Stratford of bands of travelling players. At least once every year these players came to perform their masques and morality plays, and on at least two occasions we know that some of them stayed at the house of Shakespeare's father. May we not imagine the boy sitting quiet to listen to their interesting tales

—sitting eager-eyed, envying these men, whose lives were full of change and variety, who saw the wonderful world, and mixed with their fellow-men, and were not kept within the narrow bounds of a small country town?

At any rate, we may be sure that Shakespeare watched the plays. When he was eleven or twelve years old, Queen Elizabeth paid a visit to Kenilworth Castle, which is only thirteen miles from Stratford. The Earl of Leicester received her there, and prepared a splendid entertainment for her.

“The Queen was mounted on a milk-white horse, which she reined with peculiar grace and dignity; and in the whole of her stately and noble carriage you saw the daughter of an hundred kings.

“Leicester, who glittered like a golden image with jewels and cloth of gold, rode on Her Majesty’s right hand. The black steed which he mounted had not a single white hair on his body, and was one of the most renowned chargers in Europe, having been purchased by the Earl at large expense for this royal occasion. As the noble animal chafed at the slow pace of the procession, and, arching his stately neck, champed on the silver bits which restrained him, the foam flew from his mouth, and specked his well-formed limbs, as if with spots of snow. The rider was bareheaded, and the red torchlight shone upon his long curled tresses of dark hair, and on his noble features”*

And then there came maidens dressed as sea-nymphs, and men riding on dolphins. And they made speeches and sang songs. And the trumpets blared, and

* Scott’s “Kenilworth.”

coloured lights shone among the trees and bushes. And at the end there was a splendid display of fireworks. No boy could know that such fine doings were going on within walking distance of his home and not make up his mind to be there to see. Shakespeare went—we may be certain of that—and returned home tired but happy. The memory of that splendid day lasted all his life. There is a passage in one of his later plays which many people think to be an account of this entertainment.

II.—SHAKESPEARE IN LONDON.

In 1582, at the age of eighteen, Shakespeare married. His wife was Anne Hathaway, the daughter of a farmer living in a little village near Stratford. She was eight years older than her young husband. The marriage was not a very happy one.

We do not know what trade the young man followed to keep his wife and family. It is likely that at first he worked for his father. But John Shakespeare's affairs soon became troubled. He got into debt. He lost his aldermanship because he did not attend meetings when he was called. Being in such trouble himself, he was not able to help his son very much, and Shakespeare soon saw that he could not get his living in Stratford.

In 1587 a party of the Queen's players came to Stratford. At that time actors were divided into two classes. The strolling players, the tumblers, the jugglers, the fiddlers, and other showmen were classed as vagabonds.

The better play-actors were attached to the household of a great lord, and performed plays for his pleasure. The Queen had her own troop of players ; the Earl of Leicester had his. Whenever a company of these actors went to a town, the people flocked to see them. Sometimes they played stories which taught a moral lesson ; sometimes they made the people laugh by poking fun at some great person of the day ; sometimes they even acted scenes from the life of Christ.

Very likely the visit of these players to Stratford determined Shakespeare in his next step. About this time he left Stratford, and made his way to London to seek fame and fortune.

His departure was hastened by an event which might have led to serious results. Together with a few wild companions, the lad entered Sir Thomas Lucy's park at Charlcote, about three miles from Stratford, and hunted his deer.

The laws against poaching were strict. Sir Thomas Lucy found out the part that Shakespeare had played, and caused him to be whipped. The old man's anger grew greater when Shakespeare, in revenge, wrote a ballad about him which set all the countryside laughing. He became very bitter in his enmity towards the poet. All things considered, Shakespeare thought that he would be safer in London.

To London, then, on foot, the lad travelled. He had not much money in his pocket, but he had what is far better—hope and a firm courage, health and a lightsome heart. He had determined that he would be an actor, and quickly made his way to one of the biggest playhouses in London—"The Theatre," in

Shoreditch, outside the City walls. The City Corporation at that time were not fond of theatres or play-actors, and few playhouses were built within the City bounds.

Arrived at the theatre, Shakespeare found that it was much easier to wish to become an actor than to realize that wish. Nevertheless, something had to be done to earn a living. The lad had no false pride. He did not much mind what work he did so long as it was honest. "He'd have wiped boots with a shoe-clout, cleaned a horse, commanded the Channel fleet, the army or the nation, or written a sermon for any Romanist or Puritan, to say nothing of poems and plays for young nobles and the stage."*

He noticed that the gentlemen who came to see the plays rode up to the theatre on horseback. Here was a chance! He held their horses for them while they watched the performance, and so turned an honest penny. Shakespeare put the same amount of care into this lowly office as he did into his plays. He minded horses so well that, after a time, the riders would have nobody else to do that work for them.

"Where is Will Shakespeare?" they would shout, as they rode up. And Will would come up cheerfully, with a pleasant smile, and take the reins. Soon he found that he had more horses to mind than he could manage. He hired boys, and trained them in his own methods. Henceforth, when the cry rang out for Will Shakespeare, one of these lads appeared, and, with a touch to his cap, explained, "I am Shakespeare's boy, sir."

* Dr. Furnivall.

This was the dawn of better fortune. In time the actors found that there was something above the ordinary in the young man who held the horses. His conversation showed strong good sense and refined taste. He was given the opportunity he had so long desired, and became an actor. When, in 1599, a new theatre was opened in Blackfriars, Shakespeare had already attained to such success that he owned a share in it.

This new theatre was called The Globe, and was situated in Southwark, near where Printing House Square now stands. The building inside was of a circular shape. All round it were three galleries, the lower being divided into little rooms or boxes. These were the best seats in the house, and entrance to them cost sixpence or a shilling.

The stage ran right out into the yard, or pit, where the common people were. There were no seats in the pit, and the entrance-fee was only twopence. It was generally filled with a noisy, shouting crowd, and fights sometimes took place there. When the people in the pit liked the play, they shouted and cheered; if they did not like it, they shouted and jeered. Sometimes they threw things at the players.

Very privileged people were allowed to sit upon stools on the stage. There they remained all through the performance, drinking ale, cracking nuts, and throwing the shells about, or munching apples. Pages brought them pipes and tobacco if they wished to smoke; and when they were tired of watching the actors, they amused themselves by playing cards.

The stage itself was a large platform, strewn with

rushes and draped with curtains. These last were of a light-blue colour if happy plays were being performed, but if the play were a sad one, the stage was hung with black.

There was no scenery. Placards were hung out to tell where the action was supposed to be taking place—"This is a wood," "This is a castle," "This is the Forum in Rome." In the "Midsummer Night's Dream" Shakespeare has a little joke about this practice. A party of villagers are going to play the tragedy of Pyramus and Thisbe before some noble lords and ladies. Three of the players—Quince, Snug, and Bottom—are discussing the matter :

"*Quince.* There is two hard things : that is, to bring the moonlight into a chamber : for, you know, Pyramus and Thisby meet by moonlight.

"*Snout.* Doth the moon shine that night we play our play ?

"*Bottom.* A calendar ! A calendar ! Look in the almanac ; find out moonshine, find out moonshine.

"*Quince (looking in the almanac).* Yes, it doth shine that night.

"*Bottom.* Why, then, you may leave a casement of the great chamber-window, where we play, open ; and the moon may shine in at the casement.

"*Quince.* Ay ; or else one must come in with a bush of thorns and a lanthorn, and say he comes to disfigure, or to present, the person of Moonshine.

"Then there is another thing : we must have a wall in the great chamber ; for Pyramus and Thisby, says the story, did talk through the chink of a wall.

"*Snug.* You can never bring in a wall. What say you, Bottom ?

"*Bottom.* Some man or other must present Wall. Let him have some plaster, or some loam, or some rough-cast about him, to signify wall ; and let him hold his fingers thus (*making a ring with his finger and thumb*), and through that cranny shall Pyramus and Thisby whisper" ("Midsummer Night's Dream," Act III., Scene 1).

The dresses of the players were often splendid, but were not suited to the parts. A Roman of the time of Julius Cæsar appeared in doublet and hose, and the same dress served for an Englishman of the time of King John. There were no women actors. Female parts were taken by young boys. Performances began about three o'clock in the afternoon, and were heralded by a flourish of trumpets. There was music between every act, and sometimes after a sad play the clown or funny man would dance a jig to make the people laugh.

After the first year or two Shakespeare acted very little. He was not a great actor, and only small parts, such as the Ghost in his own play of "Hamlet," or Adam in "As You Like It," were given to him. He had, however, found work that was more to his liking.

Before coming to London Shakespeare had, so we are told, written little ballads. He now began to write plays for the stage. At first he took other people's plays and altered them, improving them in places and adding passages so as to render them suitable for acting. After a time he began to write plays of his own. He seldom invented a plot. He took a story that appealed to him, and cast it in the form of a play.

The earliest of his own plays is probably "Love's Labour's Lost." It is a very clever satire on the ridiculous habits of the overdressed coxcombs of London, and makes great fun of their affected speech. It was written when the poet was twenty-four years old.

III.—SHAKESPEARE'S WORK.

By the end of the year 1599, when Shakespeare obtained a partnership in the profits of the Globe Theatre, he had already written many plays. After this date he began to make money. His plays, it is true, sold for very little, but the profits from the production of them were considerable.

For the next ten years Shakespeare remained in London. We know very little of his life during this time, except that he must have worked very hard, for during the twenty years of his working life he wrote thirty-seven plays.

He was well known to all the writers of London, and such great men as Drayton, Marlowe, and Ben Jonson were his friends. They used to meet together at the Mermaid Tavern in Cheapside, and talk over affairs of the day.

“Many were the wit-combats between him [Shakespeare] and Ben Jonson, which two were like a great Spanish galleon and an English man-of-war. Master Jonson (like the former) was built far higher in learning, solid but slow in his performances. Shakespeare, like the English man-of-war, lesser in bulk, but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about, and take advantage of all winds, by the quickness of his wit and invention.”

The young poet's success did not fail to cause jealousy among less gifted men. But nearly all the writers of the time who knew him speak of his gentleness, his kindness, and courtesy. Ben Jonson said of him : “I do love the man, and do honour his memory.” The

Earl of Southampton was his friend, and helped him with gifts of money.

And now let us speak of those wonderful plays that Shakespeare wrote while he was in London.

At first, as we have said, Shakespeare altered and improved the works of other men, fitting plays for the stage. His own earliest works are farces, full of gaiety and humour, but very slight in plot. Later on he wrote many historical plays. One of these is King John, written in 1596, just after Shakespeare had lost his only son Hamnet. We seem to hear the sorrow of the poet at the death of his dearly-loved child in the words which he puts into the mouth of Constance, the mother of Prince Arthur :

“ Grief fills the room up of my absent child,
Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me,
Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words,
Remembers me of all his gracious parts.”

It is in this play, too, that we find the following stirring passage. How well these glowing words express the feeling of Englishmen at that time, only eight years after the defeat of the Spanish Armada !

“ This England never did, nor never shall,
Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror.
Come the three corners of the world in arms,
And we shall shock them ; naught shall make us rue
If England to itself do rest but true.”

The poet's next plays were a number of beautiful comedies. Some of these, such as “ A Midsummer Night's Dream ” and “ The Merchant of Venice,” were written about the same time as the earlier historical plays. “ The Merchant of Venice ” is one of Shake-

speare's most interesting plays. It contains many beautiful passages, some of which, like the famous lines on Mercy, are often quoted :

“ The quality of mercy is not strain'd,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
Upon the place beneath : it is twice blest ;
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes :
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest : it becomes
The throned monarch better than his crown ;
His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,
The attribute to awe and majesty,
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings ;
But mercy is above this sceptred sway ;
It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,
It is an attribute to God himself ;
And earthly power doth then show likest God's
When mercy seasons justice.”

The comedies are full of the joy of life ; they breathe of happiness and light and laughter. In them we are introduced to brave men and witty women. We wander in the cool glades of the Forest of Arden with Orlando and Rosalind. We sport with Puck, the mischievous imp, and see Titania, the queen of the fairies, sleeping on her bed of sweet-smelling flowers.

But towards the end of his stay in London, a cloud seems to have come over Shakespeare's life. He wrote no more happy comedies. Henceforth most of his work was sad and gloomy. It was at this time that he produced his mighty tragedies, “ Hamlet,” “ Macbeth,” and “ King Lear.” Instead of the innocent and happy life pictured in the comedies, we now read of crime and its dreadful punishment, of misery and pain and death.

In 1609 Shakespeare left London and returned to

Stratford. He had bought himself one of the largest houses in the town, and settled down to live the life of a gentleman. While in Stratford he wrote four more plays, of which "The Tempest" is perhaps the finest. The gloomy spirit seems to have passed away now. These last four plays are calm and serene. In "The Tempest" we are taken to a distant island where lives the monster Caliban (which is only Cannibal spelt another way). An ugly monster he is, "A freckled whelp . . . not honoured with a human shape," but half fish, half man.

Once again we are introduced to a fairy. This time it is dainty Ariel, the sweet singer, the echo of whose music sounds all through the play.

"Where the bee sucks, there suck I:
In a cowslip's bell I lie;
There I couch when owls do cry.
On the bat's back I do fly
After summer merrily.
Merrily, merrily shall I live now,
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough."

When these four plays were finished Shakespeare wrote no more, but spent his time quietly working in his garden. In 1616, on his birthday, the poet died. He was buried in Holy Trinity Church at Stratford. On the wall of the chancel is a bust of him as he appeared in life.

Shakespeare's plays were collected and printed together for the first time seven years after his death. Since then his fame has spread through every country in the world. His sayings have become "familiar in our mouths as household words." He used our beautiful mother tongue as it was never used by any poet before

him; nor has any writer after him equalled his wonderful power of language. His plays have many times been produced, and have given delight to thousands.

Wise men spend their whole lives in the study of his works, for every re-reading brings new beauties to light. He has portrayed all classes of men and women, from the highest to the lowest, and all his characters are so vivid that they seem ready to start from the printed page, and to breathe and speak. He seemed to have a knowledge of all men and of all things. As a great American writer has said of him, "Shakespeare's mind was an ocean, whose waves touched all the shores of thought."

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY.

I.—SCHOOL-DAYS.

THE name of Sir Philip Sidney is one of the most honoured in our island story. He was a brave soldier, a brilliant courtier, and a writer whose works will always occupy a high place in English literature. But he is best remembered because of the beauty of his nature and the purity of his life, and because he died as he had lived, a noble English gentleman.

It was in 1554, during the dark years of the reign of Queen Mary, that Philip Sidney was born. At Penshurst, his father's beautiful house in Kent, the birth of the young heir was marked by the planting of an acorn, which grew into a mighty oak-tree, and reared its head in Penshurst Park for more than two hundred years.

On his mother's side Philip was related to the royal family of England, for Mary Sidney was a great-granddaughter of Henry VII.

As a boy Philip was not very strong, and was a little inclined to love books more than a life in the open air. In after-years one of his friends told him that he had too little fun in his nature. This was quite true, for, unlike other children, he was not laughing and merry, but walked about soberly and thoughtfully, as though he had all the weight of the world on his young shoul-

doors. Perhaps this was because he was in delicate health, for, as he grew older, he grew happier too, until, in after-life, though he was always noted for his thoughtfulness and gravity, yet he was able to take part in fun and enjoyment with as much ^{keen enjoyment} ~~zest~~ as any of his fellows.

Sir Henry Sidney, Philip's father, loved his handsome little son very dearly, but he was not able to spend as much time with him as he would have liked. For Sir Henry held an important Government office, and was often obliged to be away from home for months together.

When Sidney grew up his father sent him to Shrewsbury School. The boy threw himself into his studies with the greatest ardour, and when he was only twelve years old, wrote his father two letters, one in Latin and the other in French. Here is the letter that his father sent Philip in reply :

“SON PHILIP,

“I have received two letters from you, the one written in Latin, and the other in French. I take these in good part, and wish you to exercise that practice of learning often, for it will stand you in stead in that profession of life which you are born to live in.

“And now, since this is the first letter that ever I did write to you, I will not that it be all empty of some advices.

“Let your first action be the lifting up of your hands and mind to Almighty God by hearty prayers. And feelingly digest the words you speak in prayer, with continual ^{deep thoughts} meditations, thinking of Him to whom you pray.

“Apply to your study such hours as your discreet master doth assign you earnestly. The time, I know, he will so limit that it shall be both sufficient for your learning and safe for your health. And mark the sense and matter of that which you read, as well as the words ; so shall you both enrich your tongue with words and your wit with matter ; and wisdom will grow as years on you.

“Be humble and obedient to your master, for, unless you frame yourself to obey, you shall never be able to teach others to obey you hereafter.

“Be ^{polite} courteous of ^{graceful} gesture, and affable to all men. There is nothing that winneth so much with so little cost.

“Use moderate diet, so as, after your meat, you may find your wit fresher, and not duller ; and your body more lively, and not more heavy.

“Use exercise of body, but such as is without peril of your bones or joints. It will much increase your force and enlarge your breath.

“Delight to be cleanly, as well in all parts of your body as in your garments.

“Give yourself to be merry ; but let your mirth be ever void of biting words to any man. For a wound given by a word is harder to be cured than that which is given by a sword.

“Think upon every word you will speak before you utter it. And, above all things, tell no untruth—^{no} no, not even in trifles. There cannot be a greater reproach ^{to the grace} to a gentleman than to be accounted a liar.

“Study, and ^{intense} endeavour always to be virtuously occupied. So shall you make such a habit of well-doing

that you shall not know how to do evil, even though you would.

“Remember, my son, the noble blood you are descended of by your mother’s side ; and try, by a virtuous life and good actions, to be an ornament to your family.

“Well, my little Philip, this is enough for me, and, I fear, too much for you at this time. Farewell : your mother and I send you our blessing, and God Almighty grant you His ; nourish you with His fear, guide you with His grace, and make you a good servant to your Prince and country.

“Your loving father,

“HENRY SIDNEY.”

The clever young lad needed no pressing to make him apply himself to study. He loved learning above all things, and would gladly have spent all his life in the pursuit of it. But his father had ^{destined} ~~destined~~ him for a statesman and a courtier ; and it was necessary for the boy to learn other things than Latin and French.

So young Philip was taught to ride a horse and to use a sword, for both of these accomplishments were likely to be useful to a man who might have to fight in defence of his country. He also learned music and dancing, how to speak gracefully, and how to dress tastefully ; for these, too, were necessary arts to any young man who wished to succeed at Court.

II.—STUDENT, COURTIER, AND STATESMAN.

When he was fourteen years of age Sidney left Shrewsbury School, and went to Oxford. There he met many of the cleverest young men of the day

Walter Raleigh was at Oxford at the same time as Sidney, but he belonged to a different college.

After Sidney had been at the University for three years, the Plague broke out there. All the colleges were closed, and all the students were sent home, lest the dread disease should spread amongst them. Sidney returned to his father's house, and remained there for a short time.

His education, however, was not yet complete. His parents wished him to travel on the Continent, so that he might see other lands, and watch the life of the people in foreign countries. So the young man obtained a passport from Queen Elizabeth, which said that her trusty and well-beloved Philip Sidney, Esquire, was "licensed to go out of England into parts beyond the seas, with three servants, four horses, and all other requisites, and to remain the space of two years immediately following his departure out of the realm, for his attaining the knowledge of foreign languages."

Sidney's first stay was in Paris, where he remained for three months, and where he was the witness of a scene so dreadful that the memory of it remained with him during all his after-life.

At that time there was great strife in France between the Protestants, or Huguenots, and the Catholics. The leaders of the two parties seemed always ready to fly at each other's throats, and there was constant trouble between them.

But when Sidney arrived in Paris, it seemed as though peace were happily to put an end to this unfortunate strife. For Henry of Navarre, the leader of

the Huguenots, was about to be married to Margaret, the sister of Charles of France, who was a Catholic. Paris was full of Huguenots, who, in their delight at the marriage, gave themselves up to feasting and joy.

On the eve of St. Bartholomew's Day, about an hour and a half after midnight, when the town seemed wrapped in sleep, a sudden peal rang from the bells of the King's palace. Through the silent air the bell clanged, and at its sound the streets became thronged with armed men, who had been waiting for the signal.

Then began a scene of dread and terror, for the treacherous King had given orders that every Huguenot in Paris was to be slain. The armed men, each with a white cross bound upon the sleeve of his black mantle, marched through the streets, slaying as they went. The wretched King himself stood on the balcony of his palace, screaming, "Kill ! kill !" as the Huguenots fled past, and firing his arquebus at them again and again. For days the slaughter continued, and it was said that more than five thousand persons were slain.

Sidney, although he was a Protestant, was safe enough, for he was under the protection of Sir Francis Walsingham, the English Ambassador. Yet although the miserable King was very kind to Philip, and made him a baron, and appointed him to a high office in Court, Sidney felt that it would be best for him to leave Paris at once.

Accordingly he resumed his travels and went to Italy, where he studied the arts and sciences, and met several great men. The love for learning which he had

shown during his school-days remained with him all his life. He was always anxious to begin on some new subject. Once he thought that he would like to learn astronomy, and he wrote to a friend to ask his advice.

His friend's answer was very sensible. "A great deal of time," he wrote, "is needed to acquire enough knowledge of it to be really helpful; and I think it very foolish to get a smattering of all sorts of subjects for show and not for use. Besides, you have too little fun in your nature, and this is a study which will make you still more grave. It requires close application of thought, and thus wears out the mind and greatly weakens the body. And you know that you have not a morsel too much health."

Sidney took his friend's advice, and left astronomy alone. But he spent many hours in studying the works of great foreign writers in their own language.

After an absence of two years, Sidney returned to England just in time to take part in a royal progress which Queen Elizabeth was making through her country. The young man joined the Court and accompanied his royal mistress, and the next four months were spent in an almost ceaseless round of pleasure.

Wherever Elizabeth went she was magnificently received. Splendid castles were placed at her disposal, and their stately grounds were most splendidly decorated. Masques and plays were acted for her by young men and maidens gorgeously attired. And at night the trees were hung with many-coloured lights, and there was music and dancing, and a grand display of fireworks at the end. It was about this time that the Queen paid her famous visit to the Earl of Leicester

at Kenilworth Castle. Sidney was there, among the gaily-dressed nobles who surrounded the Queen ; and very likely among the crowd of country-folk who eagerly looked on there stood a little lad who had walked from his home at Stratford, and whose name was William Shakespeare.

The glitter and show of life at Court did not please Philip Sidney. He was not content merely to lounge about and enjoy himself ; he wanted to be doing something useful. The Queen sent him abroad on several missions to foreign countries, and these he performed very successfully. But soon he was back again in England, with the old longing for work and adventure strong within him.

Two events that happened about this time show us the young man's character very well. His father, Sir Henry Sidney, had been made Lord Deputy of Ireland. He was a just and able governor, but he had made many enemies among the Irish lords, who thought that only the poor peasants of the country ought to be taxed, and that they themselves should be allowed to pay nothing.

Sir Henry Sidney, however, took steps to make them pay, and then they complained to Queen Elizabeth. She was only too willing to listen, for Sir Henry had angered her by demanding more money to carry on his government. Then young Philip came to his father's aid, and wrote so clever a defence that the Queen was forced to admit that Sir Henry had done nothing but what was right and just.

Philip Sidney always spoke the truth without fear or favour. He refused to flatter the Queen, as so many

of her nobles did. This did not please Elizabeth, who was very vain, and liked to be reminded of her splendour and power.

At one time there was a chance that Elizabeth would marry the Duke of Anjou, brother of the King of France. Sidney believed that this marriage would not be to the best interests of the kingdom, and told the Queen so in a very sensible and clever letter. He knew that he was taking a great risk in acting in this way. Both the writer and the printer of a previous pamphlet against the marriage had been punished by having their right hands cut off. But Sidney felt that it was his duty to tell the Queen what he thought ; and, like the noble gentleman that he was, he did what he considered to be right without fear of consequences.

Sure enough, the Queen was very angry with Sidney because of his boldness. His friends advised him to leave the Court and to retire to the country for a while, until the Queen's anger should have cooled, and he found it wise to follow their advice.

During his retirement Sidney spent his time in writing. He never took up literature seriously as the business of his life, because he felt that men should rather *do* noble actions than write about them. Nevertheless, he wrote a good deal in his spare time, and some of his poems will live as long as the English language is spoken.

Besides poetry, Sidney wrote a long prose romance, called "Arcadia." In his own time this tale was very greatly admired, and it was translated into several languages.

III.—THE CUP OF WATER.

It was not long before Queen Elizabeth forgave Sidney and took him back into favour again. Perhaps, in her inmost heart, she was not so very angry with him after all ; for she could not but admire his steadfast courage and truth. At any rate, soon after his return to Court, the Queen made him a knight.

Sir Philip Sidney was now in his twenty-ninth year. He was a very handsome man, tall and graceful in carriage, with a fair skin, blue eyes, and curling, light-brown hair. His manner was quiet and modest. Everybody who met him liked him because of his winning manner and the sweetness of his temper.

Like many other men of his time, Sidney had been stirred by the brave deeds of the sailors and explorers who carried the English flag into distant waters. And so, when he heard that Sir Francis Drake was preparing for another voyage to the Spanish Main, he made up his mind to join the expedition. But Queen Elizabeth found out his intention, and flatly forbade him to go. Then, as a slight consolation, she promised that he should have a command in the army which was going to the Netherlands to help the Protestants against the Spaniards.

Sidney was delighted at this opportunity of serving his country. The Queen was as good as her word, and, in 1586, Sir Philip set sail for Flushing, an important town at the mouth of the River Scheldt.

No sooner had he arrived at the seat of war than Sidney found himself in the midst of difficulties. The army was not properly supplied with food ; many of



W. J. Mansell]

Photo.

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY ON THE BATTLEFIELD OF ZUTPHEN.

"Thy necessity is greater than mine."

the soldiers had not been paid, and were on the verge of mutiny ; the Earl of Leicester, who was in command of the English troops, proved himself unfitted for the high position he held, for he wasted valuable time in feasting. All these difficulties caused Sidney the greatest anxiety, and, to add to his troubles, he had not been long abroad before he received news of the death of both his father and mother.

When the actual fighting began, Sidney's chance of distinguishing himself soon came. Not far from Flushing there was a town called Axel, a very important base, held by the Spaniards. Sir Philip, who had heard that the Spaniards kept only a careless guard, hit upon a daring plan for the capture of this town.

One dark night, in obedience to his orders, the English troops embarked in boats, and sailed up the river until they came near to Axel. Then, taking forty picked men, Sidney left the main body and advanced. Silently the soldiers stepped forward until presently the walls of the town loomed before them, shadowy in the darkness. But a deep moat had to be crossed before those walls could be scaled, and, one by one, with infinite caution, the soldiers plunged into the water. Then, climbing the high walls, they surprised the sleepy guards above, overpowered them, and, hurrying through the streets of the town, threw open its gates to their companions. Such was the surprise of the attack that, in a few minutes, the town was taken, almost without the loss of a man.

Sidney's next battle was also to be his last.

The English were besieging Zutphen, and Leicester heard that a train of provisions was about to be taken

into the town. This he determined to prevent, and in the midst of a thick fog his army advanced to the attack. Sidney had been given the command of a troop of horse. Early in the day, as he was about to take his place at the head of his men, he met Sir William Pelham, who had left off his leg-armour. Deeming that it was against the laws of chivalry for a man to be better protected than his friend, Sir Philip retired to his tent and took off the pieces of armour which covered his own thighs.

When the fog cleared away, the English troops found themselves almost under the walls of Zutphen. Retreat was impossible. Already a heavy fire was being opened upon them, and so the order was given to charge. Sir Philip rode at the head of his men into the very thickest of the fight. His horse was killed under him, and for an hour he fought on foot. Then, procuring another horse, he led his men to the charge again.

At this moment a bullet struck him in the thigh, in the very place that should have been protected by his armour, shattering the bone. Relieved of his master's guiding hand, the war-horse turned and galloped from the field, bearing the fainting hero back to camp.

Tender hands lifted him from the saddle, and strove to ease his pain. Presently Sidney opened his eyes, and called for water to cool his parched throat. A cup of the precious fluid was brought him, and the dying man lifted it to his lips.

But, as he was about to drink, some soldiers passed by, bearing between them a wounded comrade, whose face was lined and drawn with pain. There was no water for him, he knew, for water was difficult to

obtain in that hour of battle. Yet, although he did not speak, the wounded soldier's eyes dwelt longingly upon the cup that Sidney held.

Sir Philip saw the look, and all the nobleness of his nature was shown in the last grand act of his life.

"Drink," he said, holding out the cup to the suffering man. "Thy necessity is greater than mine."

Sixteen days later, after an interval of the most intense pain, bravely borne, the hero died. Almost his last words were : "I would not change my joy for the empire of the world."

When the news of Sidney's death reached England, the nation was plunged into grief. His body was brought home and buried with great ceremony in St. Paul's Cathedral. For months afterwards the noble ladies and gentlemen of the Court went in mourning ; and "it was accounted a sin for any gentleman of quality to appear at Court or city in any light or gaudy apparel."

Sir Walter Raleigh wrote the following lines in memory of his friend :

"England doth hold thy limbs, that bred the same ;
Flanders thy valour, where it last was tried ;
Thy camp thy sorrow, where thy body died :
Thy friends thy want ; the world thy virtues' fame."

SIR WALTER RALEIGH.

I.—EARLY LIFE AND ADVENTURES.

SIR WALTER RALEIGH was born in the Manor House of Hayes Barton, in Devonshire, in 1552, the year before Queen Mary came to the throne. His father was a country gentleman of Devon, and his mother was descended from a noble Norman family. She had been twice married, her first husband being a gentleman named Otho Gilbert. One of her sons by this marriage was the famous explorer, Humphrey Gilbert.

Walter Raleigh was a very beautiful child, and he grew up into a tall, well-formed and manly youth. During his boyhood he lived on his father's estate in Devonshire. He learnt to ride, to fence, and to shoot with the pistol. He hunted the deer in the forests, fished the streams, and often went out for a day's sport with his hooded hawk upon his wrist. All this was a part of the education of a gentleman in those days, but in the care for the body the mind was not forgotten. Young Raleigh worked very hard at his books, learning his Latin Grammar, and studying with a tutor many books in that language.

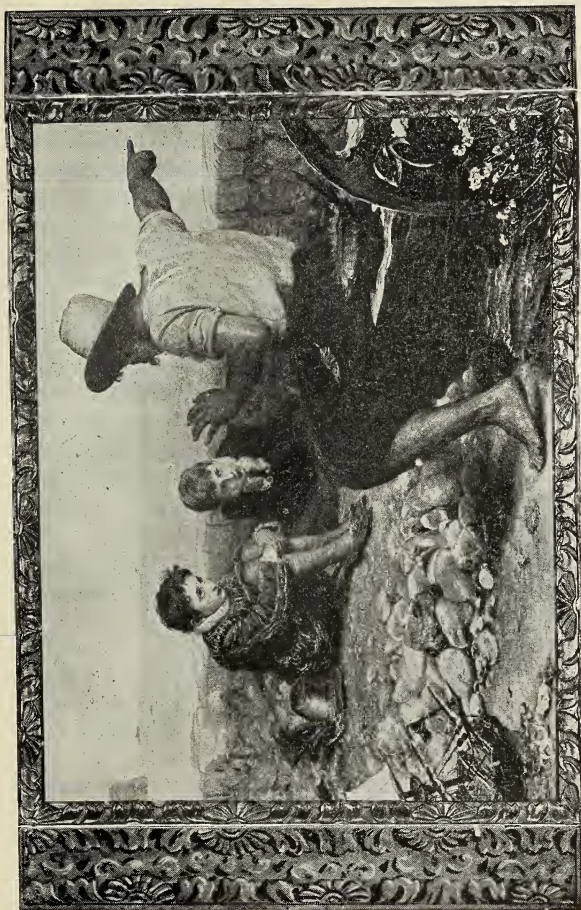
The boy was very fond of reading, and loved best those books which told of travels and explorations into distant lands.

During the long winter evenings, when the wind blew cold outside, and the rain tapped upon the window-pane, he would sit beside the crackling wood fire in his father's hall, poring over the adventures of Vasco da Gama, of Columbus, or of Magellan. With deep interest he read of the wonderful voyages of discovery which these men had made, and longed for the time to come when he, too, might sail far out into unknown seas, and plant foot in dim, distant lands at present undreamed of.

His half-brothers, the Gilberts, had already made their names as sailors. Many a time young Raleigh listened to their tales, and plied them with eager questions. Perhaps they told him of the hardships of a sailor's life, of ships battered by raging seas, of wreck and storm and distress. But they saw that the boy had the heart of a hero, and that he knew no fear.

In the time of Raleigh's boyhood the whole world was ringing with tales of discovery and adventure. Hawkins and Drake, both Devon men, and Raleigh's near neighbours, had sailed on their voyages to Africa and the West Indies. Perhaps Raleigh met with Drake, and talked to him, and wondered at the bluff sea-dog whose deeds were so great and whose words were so modest.

One other thing young Raleigh learnt in his quiet Devon home, and that was to hate the Spaniards with all his heart and soul. He learned of their cruelties to the natives of America, of their insolence and pride, and his heart burned within him. Every Englishman hated the Spaniards at that time. There was the fiercest rivalry between the two nations, and every Englishman felt that the Spaniards were only waiting



THE BOYHOOD OF RALEIGH.

(From the painting by Sir John Millais, R. A.)

for their chance to invade his country. All through Raleigh's life this hatred for the Spaniards continued.

When Raleigh was about fourteen years of age, he entered Oriel College, Oxford. One of his companions there was Hakluyt, who afterwards wrote the tales of the voyagers and explorers of Elizabeth's reign.

At Oxford Raleigh distinguished himself by his cleverness and learning. He soon became a favourite with all the students, who loved him because of his good nature, his frankness, his courage, and his un-failing gentleness and courtesy.

Leaving Oxford at seventeen years of age, Raleigh began at once that active life which lasted until his death. He saw his first military service in France, fighting for the Huguenots against the Catholics. During this campaign he fought in two great battles, and saw all the horrors and cruelties of war.

Returning to London, he lived for a time in the Middle Temple, where he perhaps studied law. The earliest of his poems was written about this time. It is not a very good poem.

Two years later—in 1578—Raleigh once more became a soldier, and went to fight in the Low Countries. After this he went on a voyage with his half-brother Humphrey Gilbert, and, in 1580, became a captain with the English troops in Ireland.

During the early years of the reign of Queen Elizabeth the English had some trouble in dealing with the wild, unruly peasants of Ireland. More or less constant fighting was going on in the country, and English soldiers were always maintained there.

Walter Raleigh distinguished himself during his

service in Ireland by his courage and his wonderful skill as a captain. His men marvelled at his coolness in time of danger.

On one occasion Raleigh had made an attack upon a castle situated some miles from the camp, and was returning through the enemy's country. Suddenly he was surrounded by the Irish, who had laid an ambush for him. The little band of English fought desperately, and succeeded in cutting their way through the ranks of their foes. All escaped but one man, whose horse had thrown him into the river. Seeing his comrade's danger, Raleigh immediately clapped spurs to his horse and returned. With a quarterstaff in one hand and a pistol in the other, he held the yelling crowd of Irish at bay until his friend had remounted his horse. Then the two rode back in safety to the troop.

One other story may be told as an example of his coolness and bravery. Raleigh was very anxious to be allowed to make an attack upon a strong castle held by an Irish chieftain. He was told that the place was too strong, and that any attempt to take it would be fruitless. The young man, however, obtained leave to try, and rode out at the head of a handful of men.

Hearing of his approach, the Irish townspeople came out in hundreds to attack him. He beat them off, rode up to the castle, battered in the gate, and entered. He found the Irish lord and lady seated at table, just about to begin their dinner. He bowed to them courteously, seized them, put them on horseback, and brought them safely as prisoners to the English camp.

When Raleigh left Ireland, his fame as a soldier was secure. Returning once more to London, he was

taken into favour by Queen Elizabeth, who was ever a keen judge of men.

It is said that one day, while he was at Court, the Queen took a sail in her state barge down the river. There had been much rain, and the shores were very muddy, so that, when the Queen came to land, she found a broad puddle in front of her. Raleigh was among her attendants, and, stepping quickly forward, he drew off his rich cloak and, with a courtly bow, spread it on the muddy ground. Elizabeth passed over without soiling her dainty shoes, and from that day, says the story, Raleigh's fortune was made.

Elizabeth showered gifts and appointments on the handsome young soldier. He was made Captain of the Queen's Guard, Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, and Vice-Admiral of Devon. He was knighted. He was given lands in various parts of the country, and valuable privileges were enjoyed by him.

II.—THE COURTIER.

For many years Raleigh remained a great favourite with Queen Elizabeth. He was ambitious, and wanted to take an important part in the Government. But the Queen, though she showered favours upon him, knew that he would never make a statesman. She never allowed him to take any leading part in politics.

At the time of his first entrance into Court life Raleigh was a most striking figure. He was over six feet in height, and carried himself with ease and dignity. His dark hair grew back from a high white

forehead. His cheeks glowed with health, and his dark eyes were clear and bright. Though a little proud and reserved in bearing, he was noted for his courtesy and gentleness.

Raleigh was always most magnificently dressed, and the splendour of his clothes was marked, even in that age of gorgeous attire. The very buttons of his doublet were diamonds. His fingers flashed with rings. It was said that the jewels in his shoes were worth 6,000 gold pieces.

His speech was always witty and bold. On one occasion, when he had asked the Queen for some favour or other, Elizabeth asked: "When will you cease to be a beggar?" Raleigh bent over the Queen's hand, and answered with a smile: "When your Majesty ceases to be a benefactor."

The Queen's wit was not less keen than his own. It is said that in his early days at Court, before he had gained much favour with the Queen, Raleigh wrote these words with a diamond upon a window-pane:

"Fain would I climb, but that I fear to fall."

Elizabeth saw the inscription, and wrote underneath:

"If thy heart fail thee, do not climb at all!"

Raleigh had never forgotten his boyish dreams of sailing upon voyages of discovery, and now that he had wealth and power, he determined to realize his wish. For many years men had been trying to discover a north-west passage to China and India. There were two ways of proceeding to the East: one was by sailing round Cape Horn, as Magellan had done, and the other was to follow Vasco da Gama's passage round the Cape of Good Hope. But many sailors thought that it

should be possible to reach the East by sailing northward through the frozen sea. Sebastian Cabot, Martin Frobisher, and many other navigators had attempted to find this passage, but so far none had succeeded.

In 1583 Raleigh's half-brother, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, determined to fit out a fleet and sail in search of the North-West Passage. He came to Raleigh for help, which was willingly given to him. Raleigh himself fitted out a ship to accompany Gilbert, but at the last moment the Queen refused to allow him to go. "Gilbert," she said, "was never a lucky sailor."

It was well for Raleigh that he remained at home. Gilbert's ships sailed as far as Newfoundland. Storms came upon them and battered them. They drifted out of their course. Sir Humphrey Gilbert's own vessel went down with all hands. Those who brought the news to England told how nobly the hero met his death. He was sitting aft, with a book in his hand, reading, when the vessel struck, and began to fill rapidly. "Fear not," he cried to the terror-stricken sailors; "heaven is as near by water as by land."

The following year Raleigh fitted up two vessels, and sent them to explore the eastern coast of North America. He wished to follow the example of Spain, and establish a colony in America.

The ships returned after six months, and the sailors gave glowing accounts of the splendid countries they had seen. As a token of the wealth of these new lands they brought Raleigh "a string of pearls as large as great peas."

Raleigh was delighted. In honour of the Maiden Queen the country was named Virginia, and, in 1585,

a fleet of seven ships set sail, bearing 100 men, who were to form the first colony. But the attempt did not succeed. The colonists ill-treated the natives, and, in consequence, found themselves in danger of losing their lives. Suffering great privations, they remained in Virginia a few months. Then Sir Francis Drake happened to put in for water on one of his return voyages. The colonists implored him to take them back to England, and he gave them a passage home.

Several other attempts were made. In one case the whole of the colony disappeared—murdered, it was thought, by the Indians. Only their deserted huts and abandoned goods were left to show that they had once been there. In all Raleigh fitted out no less than five expeditions to Virginia at his own expense, but he himself never set foot in the country.

One of the Virginian colonists brought home a herb which was much in use among the Indians. This was tobacco, which the natives smoked in rudely-fashioned clay pipes. Raleigh himself learnt to smoke tobacco, and grew very fond of the habit. A very amusing story is told of his Irish servant, who, seeing his master enveloped in a cloud of smoke, thought that he was on fire, and rushed to extinguish the flames by dashing water over him.

The Virginian colonists also brought over the potato-plant, tubers of which were planted on Sir Walter Raleigh's estate in Ireland

In 1588 the great Armada sailed to invade England, and Raleigh took a leading part in the defence of his native land. He hastened down to Devonshire, recruited and armed bands of soldiers, and sent them to

join the Queen's army at Tilbury. Then he boarded his ship, and helped in that glorious naval battle which ended in the utter defeat of the Spanish.

A year later he was unfortunate enough to lose the favour of the Queen, and was exiled to Ireland. There he met his old friend Edmund Spenser, the poet. 'As they sat together one day, Spenser told Raleigh of a new poem which he had planned, and which was to be called "The Fairy Queen." He read a number of the verses, and Raleigh liked them so well that he encouraged Spenser to persevere with the work. Later on, when Raleigh returned to Court, he made the poem known to Queen Elizabeth, who was delighted with its beauty, and ordered it to be published.

Inspired by the example of Drake, Raleigh had always had the idea of fitting out a fleet to attack the gold-bearing galleons of the Spaniards. The feat was not so easy as it had been in Drake's time. Everywhere the Spaniards were on the alert, and they guarded their treasures well. Raleigh, however, determined to try, and fitted out a fleet of ships. At the last minute he was recalled by the Queen and lodged in the Tower, because he had married without her consent. The ships sailed without him, and Raleigh was left to fume and eat his heart out with impatience.

His fleet sailed to the Azores, and soon came up with the treasure-bearing galleon, the *Madre de Dios*. Her cargo was rich beyond belief. There were carpets, and white silk, and jewels in chests of sandalwood and ebony, ivories, crystal goblets, and pots of perfume, and a great store of sweet-smelling spices. The ship was taken and towed into Dartmouth.

When the news reached the shore that a Spanish galleon was in harbour, her hold crammed with treasure, the country people rushed from far and near to see her, and, if possible, to obtain a share of the wealth she contained. The crowd soon became so large that it could not be managed. Some of the men clambered on board, and helped themselves to anything that took their fancy.

There was only one man who could command these rough sons of Devon, and he was in the Tower. Orders were sent to release him, and hot-foot, Raleigh hastened to Dartmouth. He found a considerable part of the treasure gone, but through prompt action some of it was recovered. The crowds cheered their famous fellow-countrymen, and departed quietly to their homes.

III.—THE VOYAGE TO GUIANA.

Although Raleigh had been released from his imprisonment in the Tower, he was not taken back into the Queen's favour, and he cast about for some means of once again causing her to smile upon him. He determined at last to make a voyage to Guiana, in South America, and, if possible, to add that country to the Queen's dominions.

He had read many wonderful tales of the wealth of Guiana, and of the beautiful city of Manoa, which was its capital. He had heard that the King had all the vessels of his kitchen made of gold. He had gold statues in his wardrobe, hollow, but of giant size. Most wonderful of all, an old writer spoke of a pleasure-

garden, "which had all kinds of garden herbs, flowers, and trees of gold and silver, an invention and magnificence till then never seen."

Of course, these tales were quite ridiculous, but Raleigh was carried away by the gold-fever, and earnestly believed them.

In 1595 he set sail from Plymouth with a fleet of small vessels, and proceeded to the island of Trinidad. There he cast anchor in one of the ports. There was a Spanish colony in Trinidad, under the governorship of a man named Berreo. As soon as the English ships cast anchor in the harbour, Indians came aboard with terrible tales of cruelty. The Spaniards, they said, had hanged men in chains, leaving them to starve, and tortured others in still more terrible ways.

Finding that these tales were true, and having reason to believe that the Spaniards meant to attack him, Raleigh assaulted their town, set it on fire, and took the Governor prisoner. He treated him well, and plied him with questions about Guiana. Berreo told him much that was true, and more that was not. Raleigh believed the true and false alike, and prepared to sail into Guiana by way of the River Orinoco.

This mighty river enters the sea by many mouths, some of which are very shallow and full of shoals and sandbanks. It was found impossible to sail the ships in the river, and so the company took to the boats.

Sailing with the flood, and anchoring at ebb-tide, they passed up the river for three days. On the third day the largest boat stuck fast on a sandbank, and for a long time could not be dragged free. At last, by dint

of throwing overboard all her cargo and ballast, she was got afloat, and the explorers proceeded. The sun beat down with fiery rays upon the heads of the rowers. Food gave out. The men became tired and despairing, and began to grumble among themselves. Only by promising them that in a day or two they would reach a town could the sailors be persuaded from turning back to the ships.

Just when the distress of the men was greatest, four canoes were seen sailing down the river. The boats were laid alongside; the Indians who manned the canoes jumped overboard, and took to the woods. Great was the joy of the sailors when they found that a large store of bread had fallen into their hands. After a hearty meal all discontent and despair vanished, and rosy dreams returned. "Let us go on," they cried; "we care not how far."

The sailors wondered at the beautiful scenery of the river-banks. Brightly-coloured birds—orange, crimson, and tawny—flashed like rays of living light through the branches of the trees. In the shadows of the deeper wood the climbing creepers hung from trunk to trunk. Ever and again strange flowers were seen, and the men were able to cool their parched throats with the juices of strange fruits.

Sometimes the natives came to the boats and traded cassava bread, roots, and meat. Raleigh gave strict orders that none of the natives were to be harmed. Whenever he came to a village he told the Indians that they were to complain to him if any were robbed. He showed them the portrait of Queen Elizabeth, and told them that he was the servant of a great chief, who

loved the poor and oppressed, and who would help them against the Spaniards.

After many days Raleigh and his company entered the main stream of the Orinoco, and sailed down on the current to an Indian town. A little farther down the river they heard the noise of waterfalls, and landed to view them.

“When we ran to the tops of the first hills of the plains,” says Raleigh himself, “we beheld the river, how it ran in three parts, about twenty miles off; and there appeared some ten or twelve overfalls in all, every one as high over the other as a church tower, which fell with that fury that the rebound of waters made it seem as if it had been all covered over with a great shower of rain. In some places we took it at the first for a smoke that had risen over some great town. . . .

“I never saw a more beautiful country—hills so raised here and there over the valleys, the river winding into many branches, the plains covered with green grass, the ground of hard sand, easy to march on, either for horse or foot; the deer crossing in every path; the birds towards the evening singing on every tree, with a thousand several tunes; cranes and herons of white, crimson, and carnation perching on the riverside; the air fresh with a gentle easterly wind.”

Raleigh found very little gold in Guiana. He heard that there was a whole mountain of it somewhere, but it was not his fortune to see it. Now and again, however, he and his men dug up some of the hard white rock with their daggers, and found specks of gold in it.

The mountain of gold was not the strangest thing in that country of marvels, for Raleigh had been told of

a nation of giants who had no heads. These fearsome creatures had eyes in their shoulders and mouths in the middle of their breasts. It was not his fortune to see them either.

After more than a month spent in sailing down the river, Raleigh thought of turning back to rejoin the ships. The winter floods were coming on, and almost constant rain fell, so that every man "was thoroughly washed on his body for the most part ten times in one day." Accordingly Raleigh turned, and sailed eastward towards the sea. On his way he again visited the natives, and told them of his great mistress, Elizabeth, who ruled a land far across the seas. After many hardships the boats once more arrived at the mouth of the river. But, before they could cross to Trinidad, a great storm arose, and all night the frail barques tossed upon the angry waves.

"And, being all very sober and melancholy, one faintly cheering another to show courage, it pleased God that the next day, about nine of the clock, we descried the island of Trinidad, and, steering for the nearest part of it, we found our ships at anchor, than which there was never to us a more joyful sight."

When Raleigh arrived in England, he wrote an account of the wonders of Guiana. Though he had found so little gold, he still believed the country to be very rich. And so it was, but not so much in gold as in fruits and grains and other produce of a fertile soil.

To-day a part of Guiana belongs to Britain. The sugar-cane is cultivated there, and large quantities of sugar are exported from Demerara to England.

IV.—IMPRISONMENT AND DEATH.

In 1603 Queen Elizabeth died, and James of Scotland came to the throne. With some other great men Raleigh went to meet the new King. James had heard of Raleigh, and did not like him. He looked at him sourly.

“Man,” said he, in his broad Scotch, as Raleigh bent to kiss his hand, “I have heard but *rawly* of thee.”

Raleigh had many enemies, and before long these set to work to ruin him. Before three months were out he was arrested and cast into the Tower for the second time in his life.

The charge brought against him was a very serious one. It was said that he was concerned in a plot to tear James from the throne, and make Arabella Stuart Queen of England. This Arabella Stuart was the great-granddaughter of Margaret Tudor, the sister of Henry VIII., and some people said that she was the rightful heir to the throne.

On this charge Sir Walter was brought to Winchester and tried for his life. He firmly asserted his innocence, and defended himself ably. But, despite all his efforts, he was found guilty and condemned to death.

The thought that he should be judged a traitor to his country was more bitter to Raleigh than the thought of death. He could not bear to think that his son should grow up believing that his father had been false to his King. “Know, dear wife,” he wrote to Lady Raleigh, “that your son is the child of a true man, and one who despiseth Death in all his misshapen and ugly forms.”

At the last moment Raleigh was reprieved, and for the next thirteen years he remained in the Tower, still under sentence of death. During the weary hours of his captivity he occupied himself with reading and writing. He planned an enormous work, "The History of the World," but he was only able to finish a part of it. This part, however, made a book of more than a thousand pages.

Raleigh still had friends at Court, and these tried hard to obtain his pardon. The Prince of Wales himself was a great admirer of the unfortunate man, who was so splendid as a soldier, a sailor, and a writer. He visited Raleigh in prison, and came to love him. Perhaps the Prince might have been able to procure his friend's release, but, unfortunately, he died.

And so the long years passed, until the year 1616, when the last act in Raleigh's life-drama was played. King James was greedy for gold, and had been told that Raleigh knew of a wonderfully rich gold-mine in Guiana. Eager to get some of the gold within his grasp, the King released Raleigh, and allowed him to go in search of the treasure.

Raleigh seized upon this last chance of life, and eagerly set forth. Before he went he received strict orders that he was not on any account to interfere with any of the Spanish possessions. Raleigh was now an old man of sixty-four years of age. Much of his youthful freshness of spirit had failed, and his frame was enfeebled by his long imprisonment. Nevertheless, all his natural courage still remained to him.

Once more he sailed to the Orinoco, and looked upon the mighty river he had not seen for twenty years.

When the ships arrived at Trinidad, Raleigh was lying ill in his cabin, and had to be carried to the boats. Seeing that he could not venture himself, he sent a company down the river in charge of one of the sea-captains to search for the mine. Raleigh's son went with the boats.

There followed a time of weary waiting. At last the men returned, and their captain, pale-faced and haggard, made his way to Raleigh's cabin. He told a terrible tale. No trace of the mine had been found. The Englishmen had been attacked by the Spaniards, and, forgetting their orders in their anger, had burnt the Spanish settlement of St. Thomas. Raleigh's son had been shot dead while cheering on the sailors.

The poor old man nearly broke down at the news. "By your disobedience you have brought me and mine to ruin," he said to the captain, and turned from him in utter despair.

After a stormy passage the ships crawled back into port, and almost as soon as he put foot on shore Raleigh was arrested.

The King of Spain had always hated Raleigh, and was eager for his death. To please the Spanish King, James ordered that the hero should be put to death under the old sentence, which had never been removed.

One bitter cold morning the old man was led to the scaffold, where his friends were waiting to say their last farewells. With a gentle smile Raleigh bade them good-bye. "I have a long journey to go," he said, "therefore I must take my leave of you."

Then, turning to the headsman, he asked to see the axe.

“What, man ! dost thou think I am afraid of it ?” he said, as the fellow hesitated. He ran his fingers along its edge, saying thoughtfully : “ ’Tis a sharp medicine, but a sound cure for all diseases.”

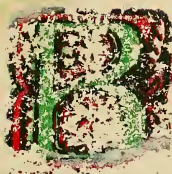
And so his brave spirit fled. After his death these words were found written in his Bible :

“ Even such is time, that takes in trust
Our youth, our joy, our all we have,
And pays us but with earth and dust ;
Who, in the dark and silent grave,
When we have wandered all our ways,
Shuts up the story of our days ;
But, from this earth, this grave, this dust,
My God shall raise me up, I trust.”



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